

State Institutions For The Feeble-minded

By

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THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR
MENTAL HYGIENE, Inc.
50 Union Square
New York City
1920

The National Committee for Mental Hygiene

FOUNDED 1909

INCORPORATED 1916

50 UNION SQUARE, NEW YORK CITY

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GENERAL PURPOSES

The National Committee for Mental Hygiene and its affiliated state societies and committees are organized to work for the conservation of mental health; to help prevent nervous and mental disorders and mental defect; to help raise the standards of care and treatment for those suffering from any of these disorders or mental defect; to secure and disseminate reliable information on these subjects and also on mental factors involved in problems related to industry, education, delinquency, dependency, and the like; to aid ex-service men disabled in the war; to coöperate with federal, state, and local agencies and with officials and with public and private agencies whose work is in any way related to that of a society or committee for mental hygiene. Though methods vary, these organizations seek to accomplish their purposes by means of education, encouraging psychiatric social service, conducting surveys, promoting legislation, and through coöperation with the many agencies whose work touches at one point or another the field of mental hygiene.

When one considers the large groups of people who may be benefited by organized work in mental hygiene, the importance of the movement at once becomes apparent. Such work is not only for the mentally disordered and those suffering from mental defect, but for all those who, through mental causes, are unable so to adjust themselves to their environment as to live happy and efficient lives.

STATE INSTITUTIONS FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED

V. V. ANDERSON, M.D.

Associate Medical Director, The National Committee for Mental Hygiene.

THE depredations, the vast expense, and the loss in wasted and frequently vicious human lives growing out of the lifelong dependency and criminal behavior of untrained and unsupervised mental defectives continue to furnish practical arguments for a broad and comprehensive state policy of protection against the burden of feeble-mindedness. The extent and menace of this problem, the close relationship it bears to hereditary pauperism and dependency in general, to juvenile delinquency, to adult crime, to prostitution and the like, have been brought out in recent surveys of mental deficiency conducted by the National Committee for Mental Hygiene in Kentucky, Maine, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Georgia.

Growth of provision for this class has greatly increased during the past few years, so that now only five states in the Union have failed to make any institutional provision for their feeble-minded—West Virginia, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. Let this not be understood as meaning that other states are doing their full duty in this direction. Though most states can now be said to have made a beginning in the way of handling this problem, still not a single state in the Union is doing more than touching the surface; vast numbers are as yet uncared for, untrained, unsupervised, and unprotected. “It is safe to say that no state has as yet officially taken cognizance of 10 per cent of the mentally defective persons within its borders; no state has even ascertained their number, their location, or the nature and expression of their defect. The great majority of these defectives receive no education or training and no adequate protection or supervision.”

The largest and most urgent need in connection with this problem is greatly increased institutional provision. The keynote to any and every program of properly handling the problem of feeble-mindedness is the institution; around it must revolve all other state machinery. Interest in such institutional provision has become widespread, and during the year 1919, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi and Hawaii, not hitherto providing institutional care for the feeble-minded, made appropriations for the construction of such schools. Massachusetts, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin appropriated large sums for the construction of new institutions, while South Carolina, Oregon, New Jersey, South Dakota, Nebraska, and other states provided appropriations for the construction of additional buildings.

With this increased program for institutional development, greater care and more serious attention are being devoted to the type of buildings and methods of constructing and operating such institutions. It is becoming increasingly evident that instead of each state's building something entirely new or what seems locally to be desirable and attractive in structure and design, the object should be to profit by the experience of the past and from the knowledge of those who have a practical familiarity with the needs and requirements of the defective, and after a careful study of existing institutions, to combine as far as possible all of their good features, and especially to avoid their defects and inconveniences.

This article, which is essentially concerned with the construction, administration, and operation of an institution for the feeble-minded, is the result of a careful study of certain leading institutions for the feeble-minded in the United States. It is based upon the splendid work done at these institutions by Fernald, Little, Wallace, Murdoch, Bernstein, Emmerick, Bliss, Haynes, Cobb, Wilmarth, and others.

In the first place, there are certain generalizations about which there can be no difference of opinion. In planning a new institution the following things are essential—ample acreage, proper transportation facilities, adequate water supply, drainage, and sewage disposal. It is well, also, to consider the possibility of a gravel pit, and plenty of clay for the making of brick by the high-grade boys.

SITE

In choosing the site or location of the school, accessibility or nearness to large centers of population is particularly desirable; parents are always more willing to permit of the commitment of their children if visiting is made easy. The advantages in the way of clinical opportunities offered by such an institution for the purpose of training teachers for special class work and medical men for diagnostic work in connection with clinics in schools and courts must not be lost sight of.

The amount of land is more or less arbitrarily fixed at an acre per inmate, and the number of acres bought should equal the number of inmates eventually expected. If possible, good farming land should be secured—land adapted to gardening, farming, and dairy purposes. If one is unable to get a fertile farm, sometimes poor farms can be secured and the land improved. It is all right in the rocky sections of our country to buy land that can be gradually cleared up, but wherever possible it is wise to buy land that has good soil. Farming is one of the things that the feeble-minded do best, and the per capita cost can be reduced materially if intensive farming is carried on.

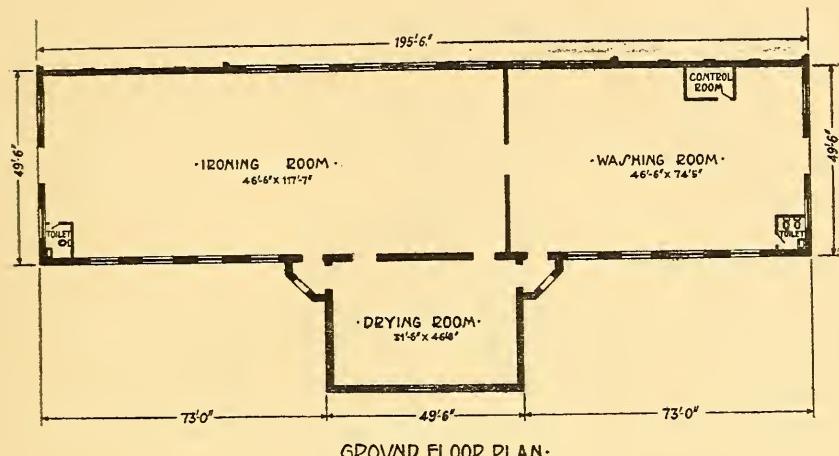
PLAN

With the site secured, there should be a careful layout of the institution. A complete plan of development should be carefully worked out before the first building is erected. This is necessary because of the underground piping, which has to be extended from building to building; also, to permit of an adequate plan of classification of the children; and finally that the whole may have some relation to the central buildings, such as the power house, administration building, laundry, etc. A topographical map should be kept permanently at hand. Such a map, showing the location of every conduit, pipe, wire, or other underground structure, will prove invaluable.

LAYOUT OF BUILDINGS

Such a layout of buildings as the following is customary:

- A. Administration building, containing general offices and scientific library.
- B. The educational group and assembly hall, containing facilities for grade work, manual training, industries, physical training, and entertainment, such as concerts, dances, movies, and the like. These buildings should be located conveniently to the cottages. The regular carpenter shop should be in connection or in close proximity to the manual-training department, as much of the apparatus can be used for both, and the more proficient children can be graduated into the carpenter shop. Very near at hand a special school garden, small orchard, and chicken yard should be planned for the training in gardening, fruit growing, and chicken raising during the children's school years in preparation for their later activities on the farm and at the colony.
- C. Service buildings, containing a central kitchen plant, bakery, store room, cold storage, etc. A discussion of the relative merits of the large congregate dining room as opposed to the cottage-dining-room plan need not be entered into here further than to state that the latter has more points in its favor. The question of greater protection to the children in bad weather and of more individual care and attention from the house mother in feeding, etc., outweigh in my estimation any question of economy that might be offered in favor of the congregate dining room. As regards keeping the food hot, this is a very simple matter, as has been demonstrated at Waverley, Wrentham, and other institutions. The food can be served with perfect satisfaction from the central kitchen by means of specially prepared and properly heated containers.
- D. Power plant. In this connection the necessity for a completely developed plan of mechanical equipment, light, heat, and power should be emphasized.
- E. Laundry. This should be a one-story building. The floor should be on a level with truck or wagon bed so as to avoid the necessity for lifting the baskets up and down. The building should be so arranged that the soiled clothes may go in at one door, be put through the washers, then through the extractors, on through the dry room, into the mangle room, and finally on out through the mending room. The new laundry building at Letchworth Village shown here offers a very satisfactory illustration of the more modern type of institutional laundry.

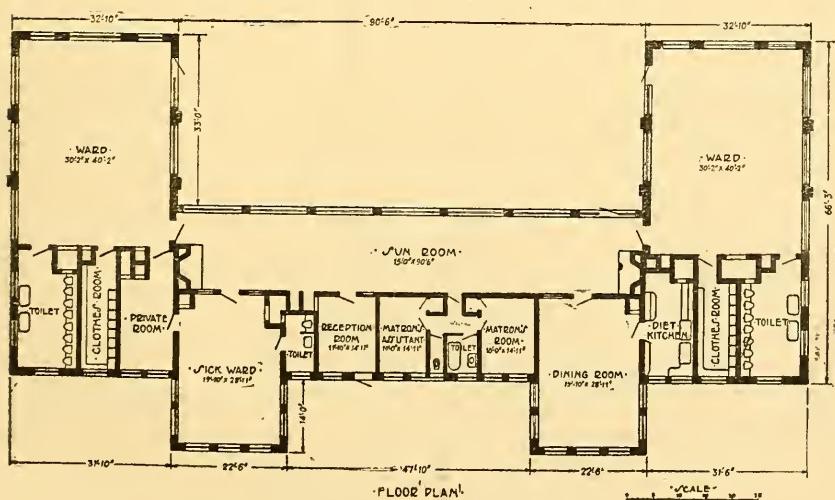


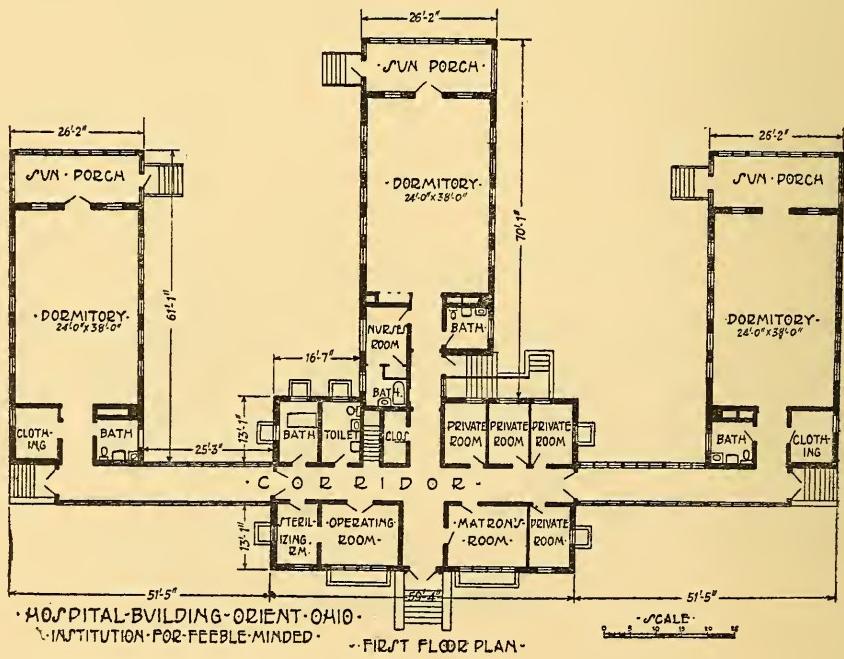
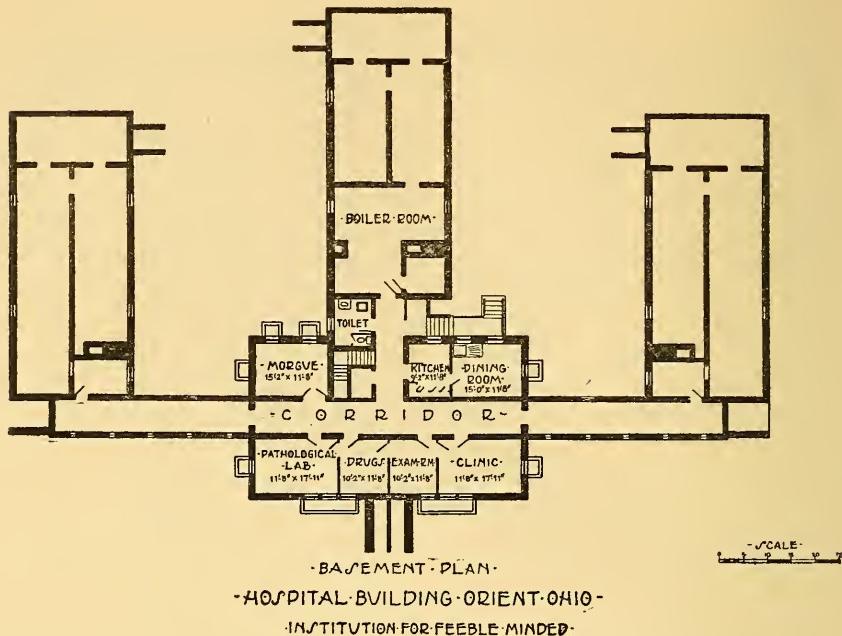
GROUND FLOOR PLAN.

SCALE

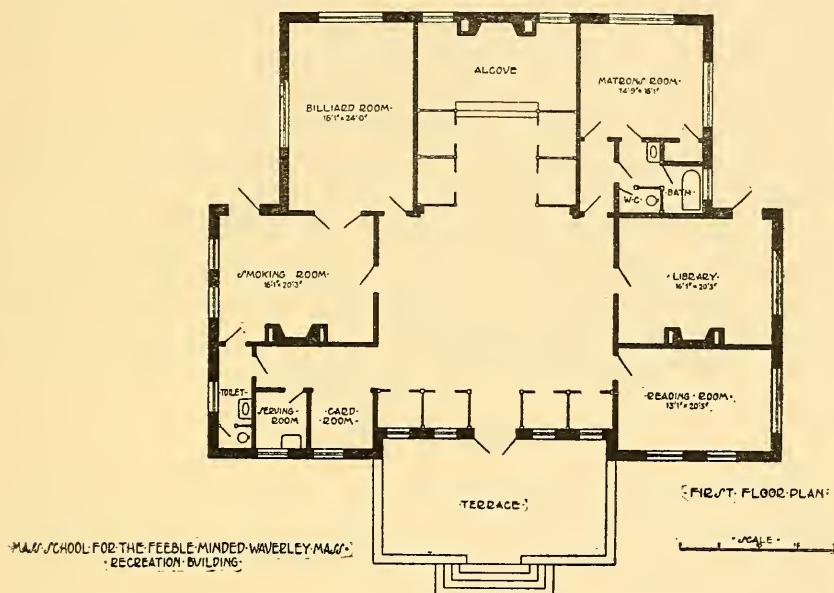
LETCHWORTH VILLAGE LAUNDRY.

F. Hospital. The planning of this building is for obvious reasons a matter of considerable importance, and much thought has been given to it by many leading institutional men. Two plans are given below, illustrating general points that need to be considered in constructing a hospital or infirmary building.

MALE HOSPITAL WAVERLEY MASS.
SCHOOL FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED.



G. Employees' buildings. These should be separate buildings, not only for the housing, but for the recreation and entertainment of the employees. A splendid type of recreation building is shown below. It is the one now in use at Waverley.



The type of construction should be permanent, fireproof, and of whatever material is most economical in the locality in which the institution is situated. This means either brick, stone, or cement. It is well to bear in mind that cheapness of construction, followed by repairs, is costly. In constructing these buildings eliminate unnecessary ornamentation; plan for plenty of air, light, and economy of space, having in mind the suitability of the buildings for their purpose; and reduce the cost to the point where it cannot be criticized by the taxpayer and the business man. We would do well to profit by a study of some of the beautiful and well-proportioned commercial buildings now being erected by certain large corporations, such as the General Electric Company.

Around these central buildings at proper distances should be grouped the cottages for the children, making allowances for plenty of space and opportunity for segregating various types.

It can be seen from the above outline that the old-time large central building from which new additions radiate as the

necessities of the occasion demand has now become obsolete. In its stead a villagelike community is being built, with detached cottages of moderate size, of one- or two-story construction, giving opportunity for classification, for separation by sex, for the division of each sex into groups, such as (a) the young and trainable, (b) the infirm, (c) the adult worker, (d) the defective delinquent, etc.

For each group there should be separate buildings of moderate size at suitable distances apart, each cottage having at least one acre of ground.

All of our institutional men are getting away from the idea of handling two or three hundred children in one building. It is a common tendency now to decrease the size and increase the number of buildings in order to secure the proper classification and segregation of different types.

THE COTTAGE

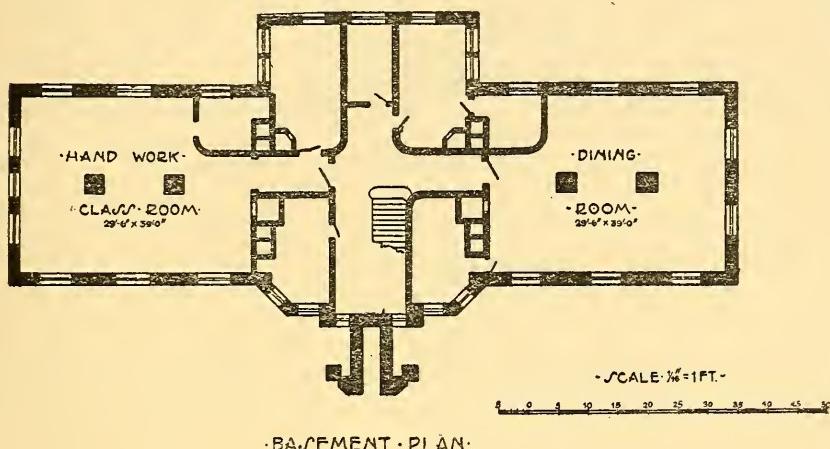
Each cottage should provide for not more than seventy children. It is probably not a matter of great importance whether the cottages are of one- or two-story construction. However, three- or four-story dormitories are now regarded as relics of the darker ages in institutional building. The one-story dormitory can probably be administered more economically than the two-story dormitory holding the same number of children. Feeble-minded children can be cared for with much greater comfort and safety to themselves and ease to the attendants in charge in a building free from stairways than in one where steps are necessary.

Each cottage should have a large, light, and airy basement. These basements would not be absolutely necessary if building facilities could be secured for schoolrooms, manual training, industries, and the like. But this is practically always found impossible in the early days of an institution, so that these basements may be used for the entertainment of the children by providing such equipment as bowling alleys, pool tables, etc.

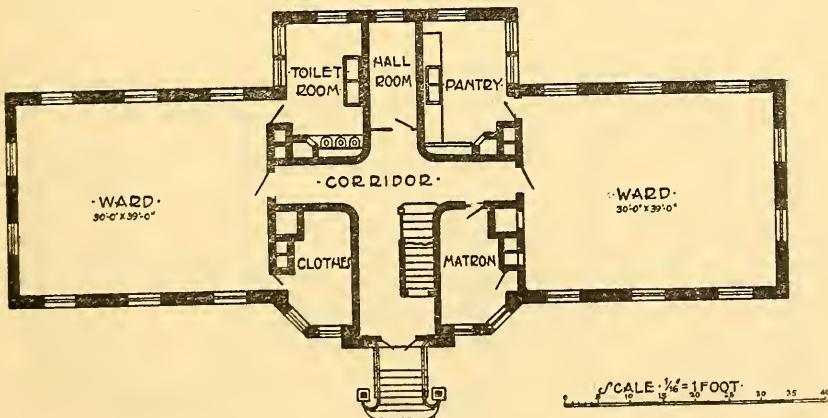
Cement terraces and walks around each cottage are very desirable. They permit of plenty of outdoor exercise for the children in the winter. The cottages should have indirect heating; this insures a good circulation of air, the air being

forced in from the outside over the hot coils and into the room. The indirect system eliminates the danger of burns from the radiators.

Below are given plans of typical dormitories in certain leading institutions in this country.

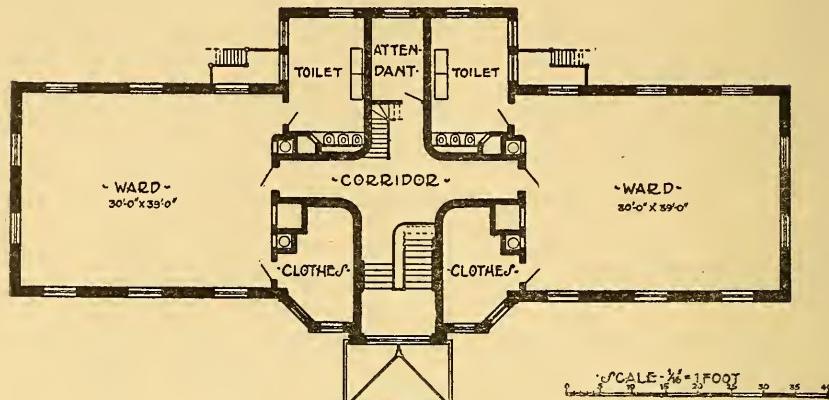


•MASS. SCHOOL FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED•



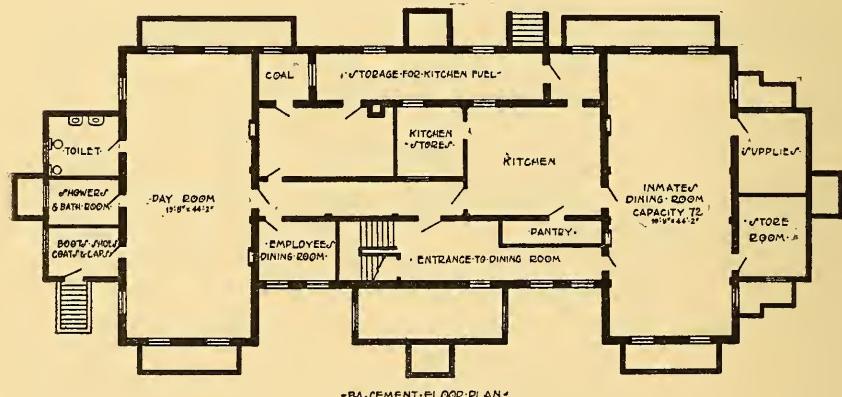
•MASS. SCHOOL FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED•

10 STATE INSTITUTIONS FOR THE FEEBLEMINDED



-SECOND FLOOR PLAN-

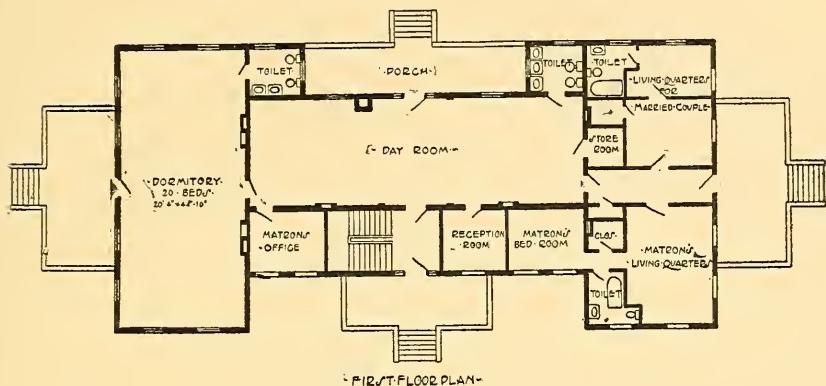
-MASS. SCHOOL FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED-



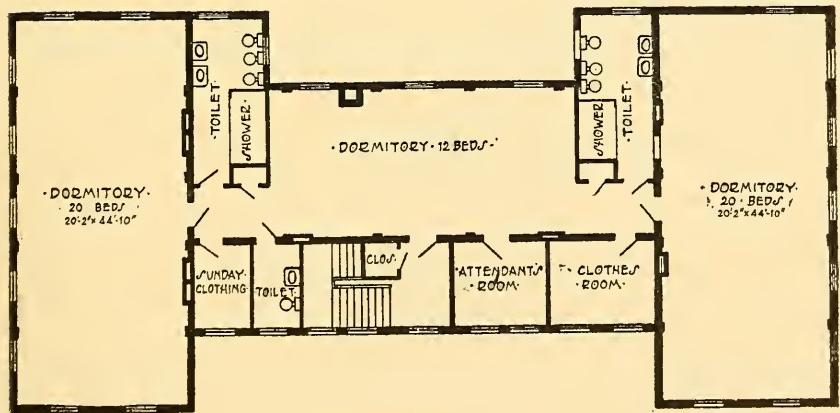
-BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN-

- MICHIGAN HOME & TRAINING SCHOOL LAPEER, MICH. -
- FARM COTTAGE -

- SCALE - 1/8 = 1 FOOT

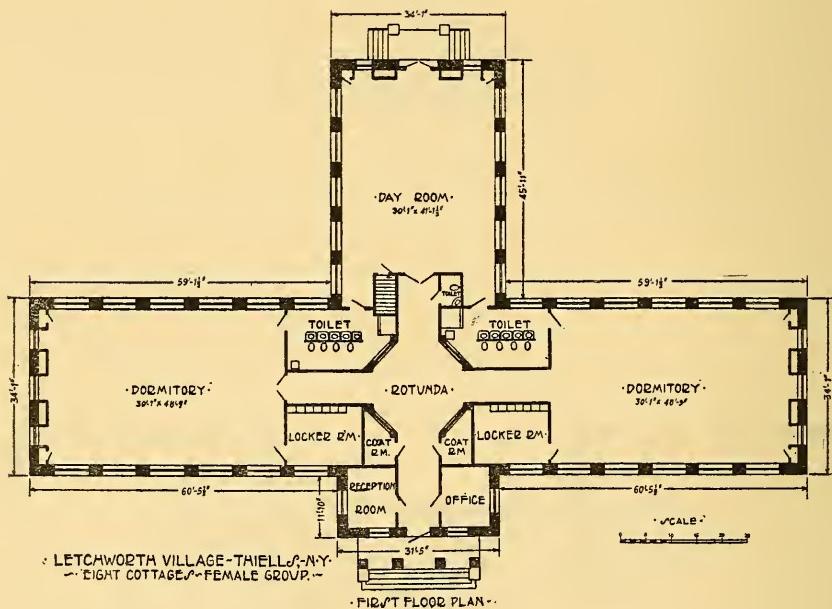


MICHIGAN HOME & TRAINING SCHOOL - LAPEER, MICH.
- FARM COTTAGE -

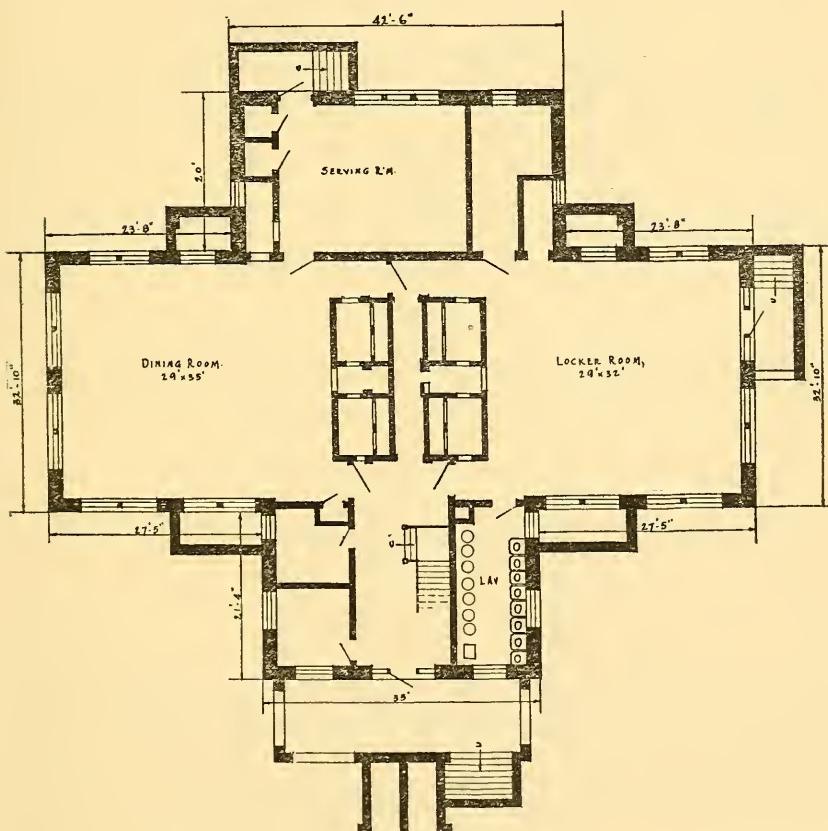


MICHIGAN HOME & TRAINING SCHOOL - LAPEER, MICH.
- FARM COTTAGE -

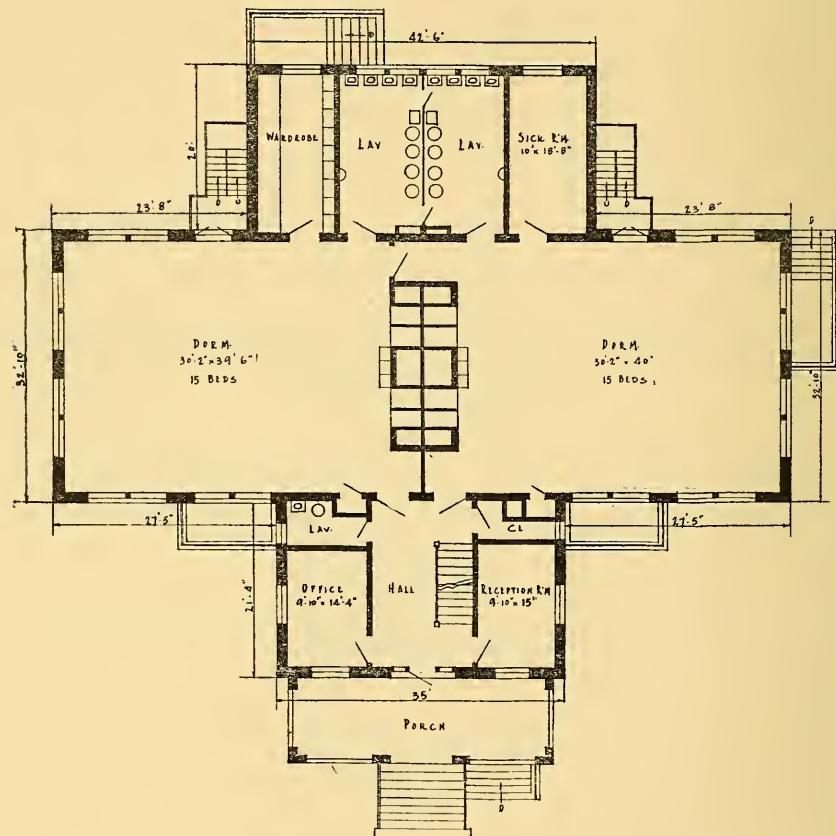
12 STATE INSTITUTIONS FOR THE FEEBLEMINDED



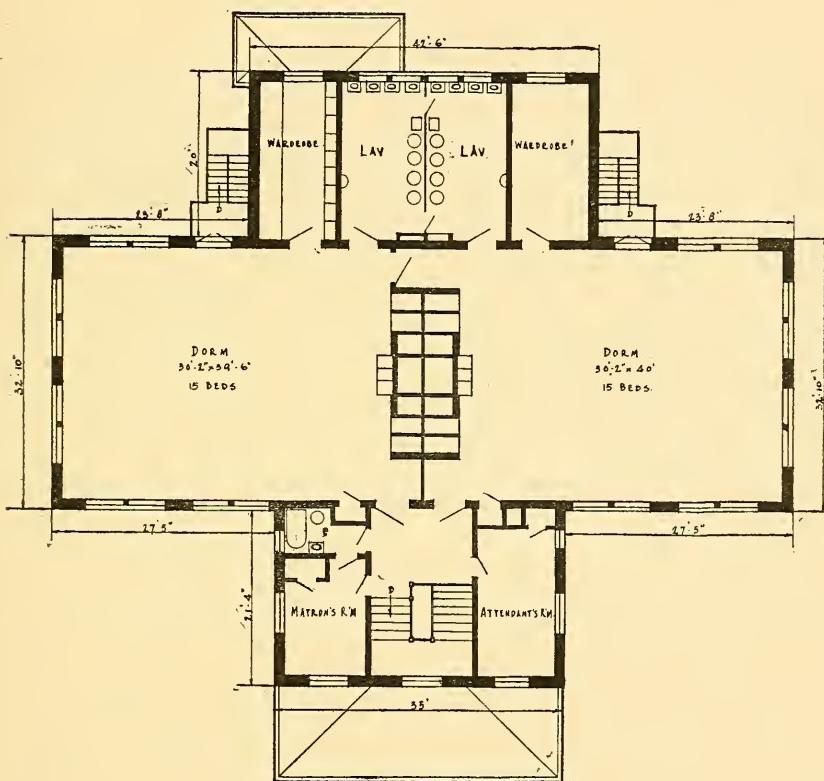
WRENTHAM STATE SCHOOL, WRENTHAM, MASS.
DORMITORY G.
BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN.



WRENTHAM STATE SCHOOL, WRENTHAM, MASS.
DORMITORY G
FIRST FLOOR PLAN.



WRENTHAM STATE SCHOOL, WRENTHAM, MASS.
DORMITORY G,
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



The cottage plan permits of adequate classification and should be carefully developed with this in mind. The males should be separated from the females. The improvable and educable boys should be in a group by themselves, quite distinct from the adult males and the infirm.

Adult males should be located near large tracts of land available for farming purposes, in order properly to utilize their labor in farm, dairy, and garden operations.

The young and teachable girls should be separated from the women and the infirm females. The women should be located between the laundry and the group for infirm females, thus providing economical utilization of their services in these

departments. They can also be profitably used in connection with gardening, chicken raising, fruit growing, canning, etc.

The higher-grade types should be cared for in small groups. The lower-grade type of imbeciles and idiotic patients can be cared for in much larger groups to advantage.

ADMINISTRATION

The administration of such an institution will depend upon its size and character. The most important question in this connection is the selection of a superintendent. He should essentially be a medical man with special training and experience with the feeble-minded. He should be a man with executive ability, of good business judgment and keen human sympathy. There are those who argue that a layman is a better business man than a medical man, and consequently that a layman should be in charge of the institution, but it should be remembered that this is not purely a business proposition. The humanitarian aspect of the work cannot be ignored, and the medical side of the question particularly is so closely linked up with the business side that it is impossible to separate one from the other. Each day will see many problems arise that are neither solely business in nature nor solely medical, but both. It can be definitely stated that the layman, the purely business man, does not get the patient's point of view, while the medical man not only grasps fully the varied mental, physical, and social aspects of mental deficiency, but can appreciate the purely business side as well as the layman. The superintendent should draw around him a very carefully chosen staff of physicians, teachers, matrons, and attendants. The success or failure of the institution may well depend upon the character of personnel chosen. Particular care should be devoted to the selection of matrons and attendants, who live with the children and on whose shoulders falls the daily burden of caring for them. Personality should rank high, and there should be an understanding insight into the problems of the feeble-minded child.

INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Some of the children are as helpless as infants, incapable of standing alone, dressing, or feeding themselves. The chief indication with these lower-grade cases is to see that their

wants are attended to and to make them comfortable and happy as long as they live; but even with these cases much improvement is possible in the way of teaching them to wait upon themselves, to dress and undress, to feed themselves, and to give attention to personal cleanliness and habits of order and obedience. In this way large groups, even of low-grade cases, may be made less troublesome, and the burden and expense of their care considerably lessened.

Manual training and such methods are more especially adapted to the development of feeble-minded children than the ordinary school-grade and academic work. The methods of physiological training of the senses and of exercising and developing the powers of attention, perception, and judgment by teaching the qualities and properties of concrete objects instead of expecting the child to absorb ready-made knowledge from books—of progressively training the eye, the hand, and the ear—these are the methods best suited to developing the feeble mental powers of the defective. Such regular grade work as is given is done along more intensive lines, and in much smaller groups, than in the public schools—about fifteen children in a class.

A most prominent feature of the educational training in our best institutions to-day is the attention paid to industrial occupations. Fernald says, "In this education by doing, we not only have a very valuable means of exercising and developing the dormant faculties and defective bodies of our pupils, but at the same time we are training them to become useful men and women." Carpentry, painting, printing, brick making, shoemaking, tailoring, dressmaking, broom and mattress making, stock raising, dairying, farming, domestic work, and other industries are now successfully carried on by pupils in schools for the feeble-minded in connection with the strictly mental training. They not only prove profitable in the way of financial return to the institution, but form a splendid outlet for the energies of the over-active and disciplinary cases, besides offering an occupational basis for those who are later to be supervised under parole.

The gymnasium is a very important phase of institutional life. It is the center for varied physical training, folk and classic dancing, basket-ball games, orchestra and band music, etc.

An essential part of the institution is the farm and colony. A large proportion of the feeble-minded can be usefully and profitably employed if intelligently directed. They can clear waste land, grub bushes, remove stones, build fences, make roads, drive teams of oxen or horses, milk cows, feed pigs, take care of chickens, cultivate land, and gather crops. They can excavate for buildings, haul stones, make brick and cement blocks, and do the necessary painting to keep the buildings neat and attractive. In states where the colony plan has been utilized and intelligently directed, as it has in the Templeton Colony in Massachusetts, large crops have been yearly grown and unusual success has been obtained from this method of treatment. The entire cost of Templeton Colony, which comprises about 1,814 acres of land, including the land, the central farmhouses, and the repairs needed to fit the old dwellings for use, amounted to only \$378.00 per capita for the 300 inmates for whom provision was made. This cost is probably less than any similar provision for the feeble-minded in this or any other country. Many of the children who at the training school found the necessary restraint irksome are free at the colony to come and go. The destructive tendencies often marked in the schoolroom find their outlet here. Instead of breaking windows, destroying furniture, or setting fire to buildings, as these children so often do when confined in penal institutions, they cut down bushes, pull up stumps, burn brush heaps, and make waste land available for farming, thus increasing its value and decreasing the cost of maintaining themselves as the wards of the state.

Another and very far-reaching method for handling the feeble-minded on a colony basis is that which is being so successfully demonstrated by Dr. Bernstein at Rome, New York. He is placing groups of high-grade girls under the careful supervision of well-trained and trusted matrons at work in domestic and other service in certain localities of the state. A house is rented for these girls to which they return at night, and all of the comforts and pleasures, as well as the restraints, of regular home life are thrown around them.

Each and every child, upon being received in the institution, should be given a careful and searching mental and physical examination. The results of these examinations

should be made the basis for permanent records. At stated intervals reëxaminations should be given. The medical treatment and educational training of the children will naturally to a great extent be guided by the information furnished. The pathological, the psychiatric, the psychological, the educational, and the social work of the institution, properly coördinated by the superintendent, should each constitute a part of a comprehensive scheme for the study, treatment, and training of the individual child, and should not in any sense constitute independent units, each revolving on its own axis, separate and distinct from the others. Out-patient clinics should be conducted by the staff of the institution at various cities and towns throughout the state, serving the general community, the schools, the courts, and various social agencies. It should be possible to establish contact between the institution and the university and normal school for the purpose of training future physicians and teachers in the field of mental defect.

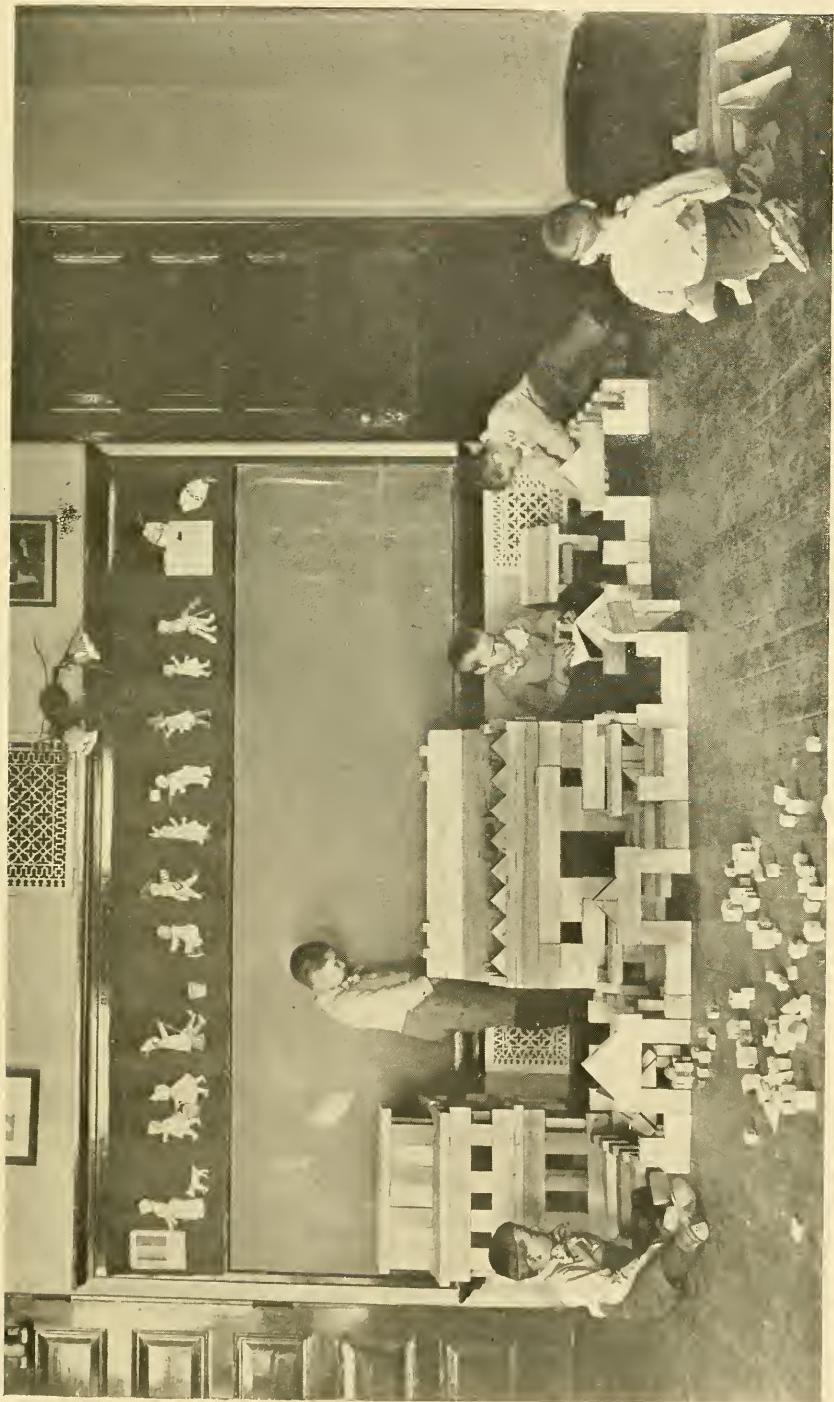
PAROLE

It has been fairly well determined that the average adult male defective who does not possess serious personality difficulties, who has been properly trained in habits of obedience and industry, and who is adequately protected from temptations and evil associates, can be safely paroled into the community. Dr. Fernald reports that a careful study of the discharges from Waverley for twenty-five years showed that a very small proportion of the discharged male morons had committed crimes, had married or become parents, had failed to support themselves, or had been bad citizens. We know enough about mental defect to-day to be able to state that there are good and bad mental defectives, that some feeble-minded individuals possess traits of character and handicaps of personality that make it absolutely impossible to handle them out in the community, while other defectives, because of a desirable personality make-up, possess a very definite community value, are fairly efficient industrially and adaptable socially, and can be properly supervised outside the institution. The relation that a properly worked-out parole system will bear to a broad and comprehensive state policy for handling mental defectives is quite obvious.

The business man and the taxpayer will doubtless, for some time to come, be unwilling to segregate all defectives purely on the theory that some of them may become delinquent and dependent, so that complete institutional provision for all defectives can hardly be expected. If, however, a period of careful training suited to their particular needs is given to every feebleminded child, and those children who are able to profit by such training and who possess community value are given careful supervision throughout their lives, while those whose tendencies are such as to make them undesirable members of the community are permanently segregated in the state institution, then a very satisfactory solution of the burden of feeble-mindedness will have been reached.

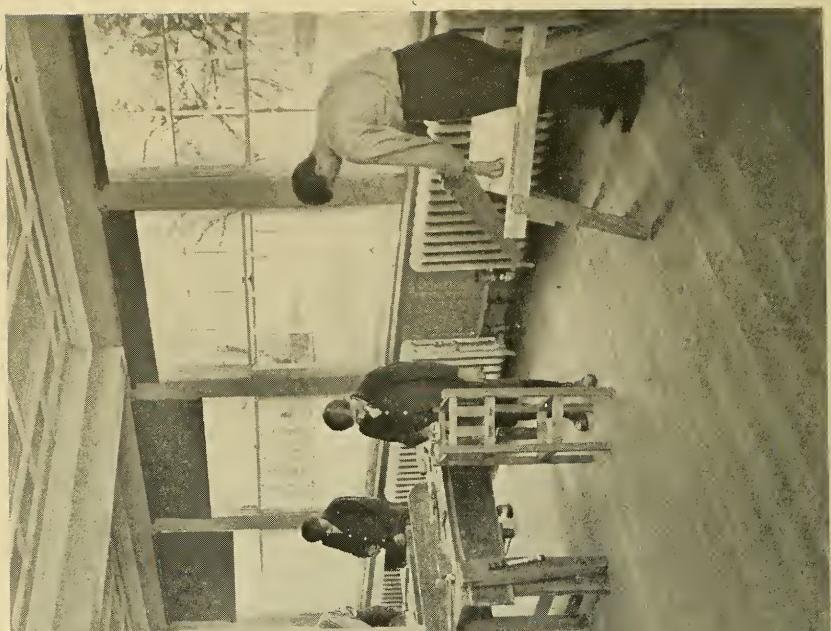
SUMMARY

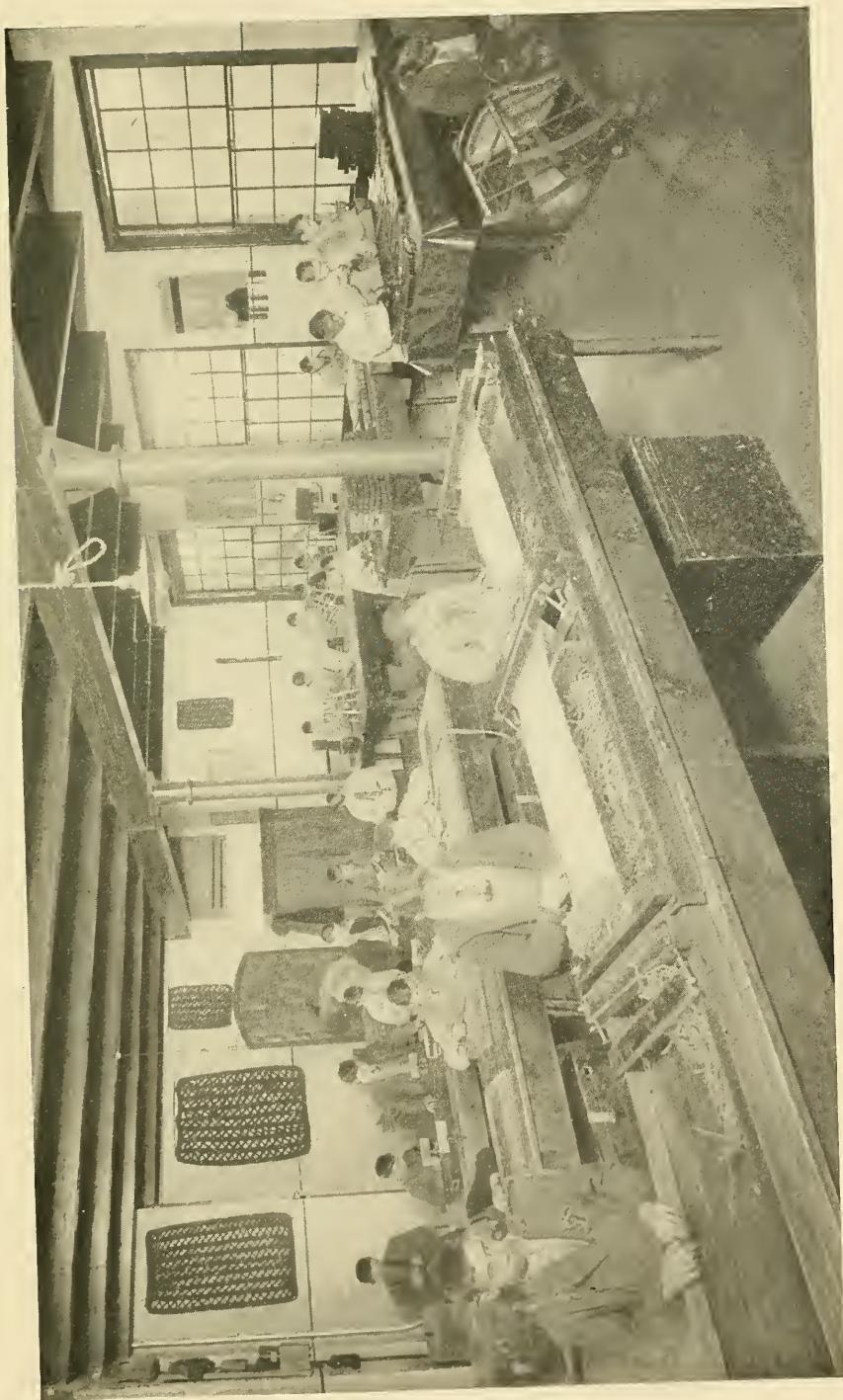
The problem presented is to plan an institution that will remove a large number of feeble-minded from the community; that will satisfy parents that their children will be humanely treated; insure the happiness and comfort of the children; educate or train each one according to his abilities; provide such facilities as will utilize the labor of the trained inmates to reduce the cost of their support; secure and retain high-grade employees; build to satisfy all requirements; meet the topographical conditions of the site; separate the inmates in groups for proper classification; plan the buildings for simplicity and economy of administration, with a minimum outlay for repairs and upkeep; organize and develop scientific research into the causes underlying mental defect, its extent, and its menace, and the best methods for meeting and solving the problem that it presents; parole and supervise out in the community those children who have profited well by institutional training and are able to adapt themselves to normal life; furnish clinical facilities for diagnosing mental defect in the general community, in the public schools, and in the courts; offer opportunity for the training of teachers and medical men in the diagnosis, treatment, and training of mental defectives; and, finally, do all this at a cost in accordance with modern business standards.



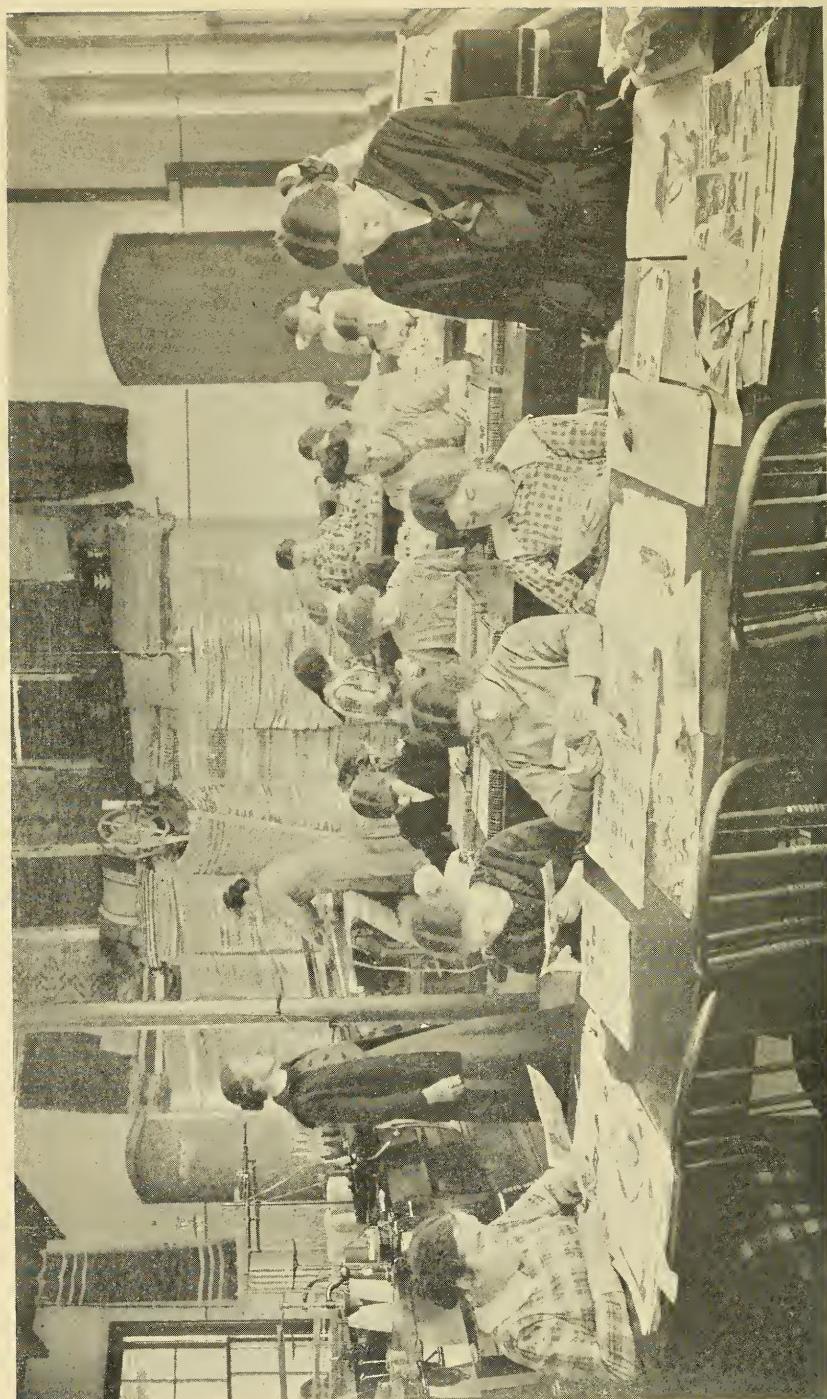
The kindergarten

Manual-training class





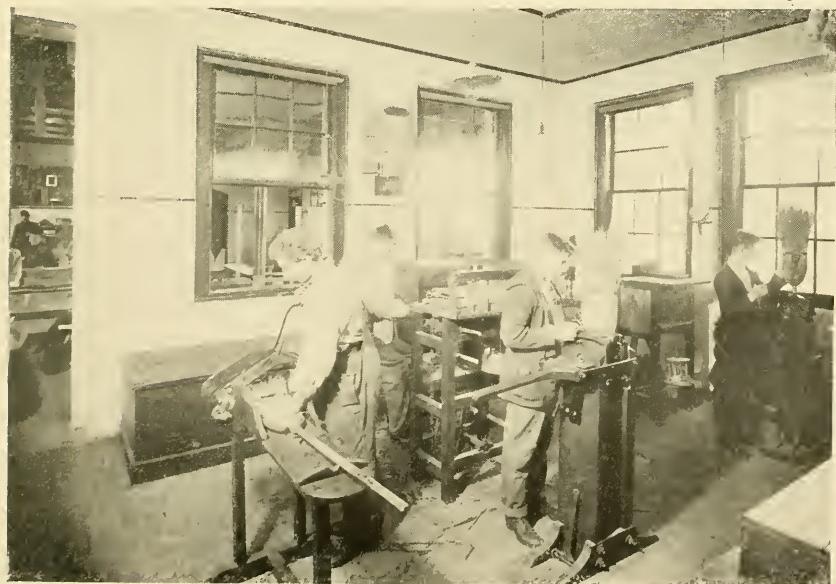
Varied occupational training



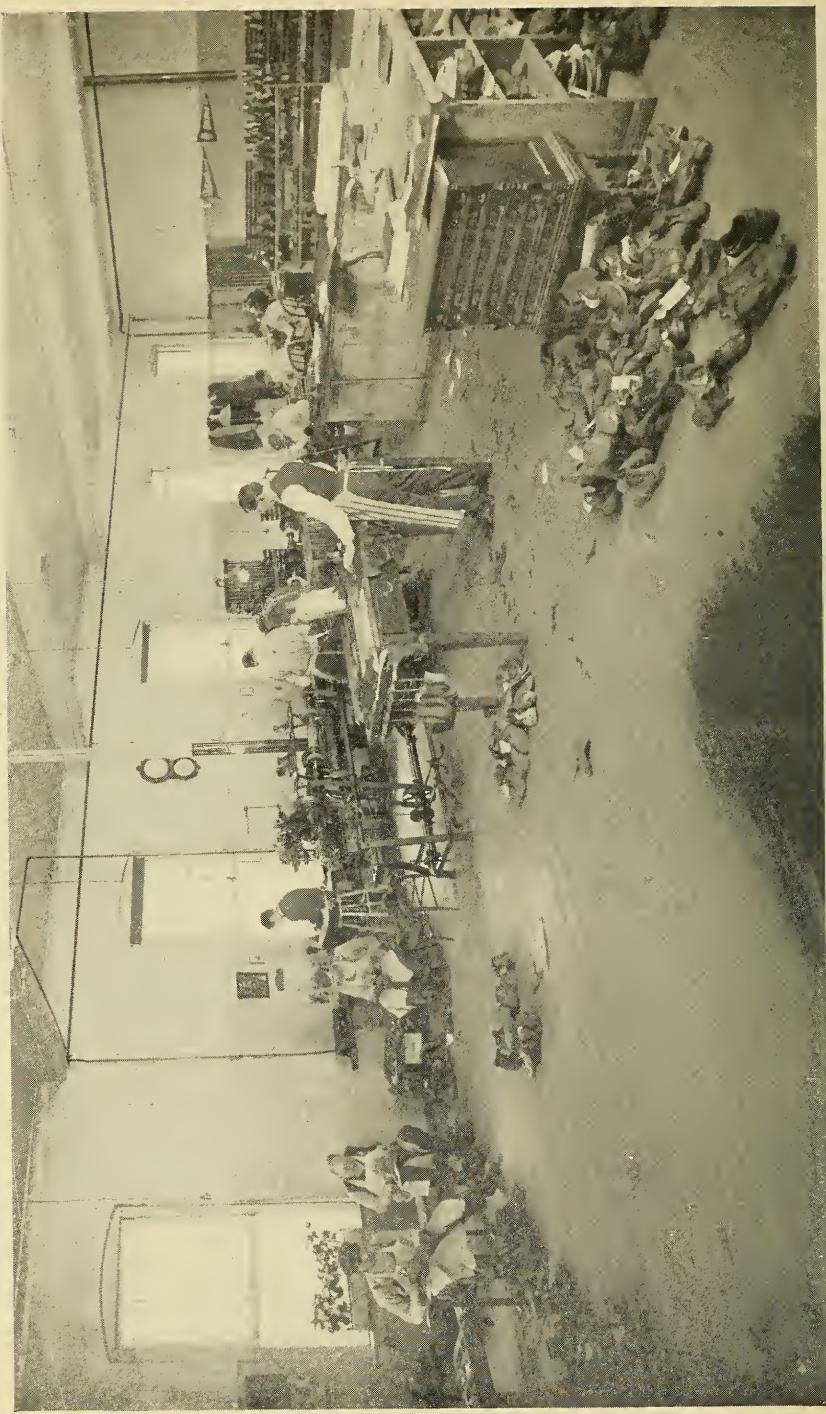
Varied occupational training



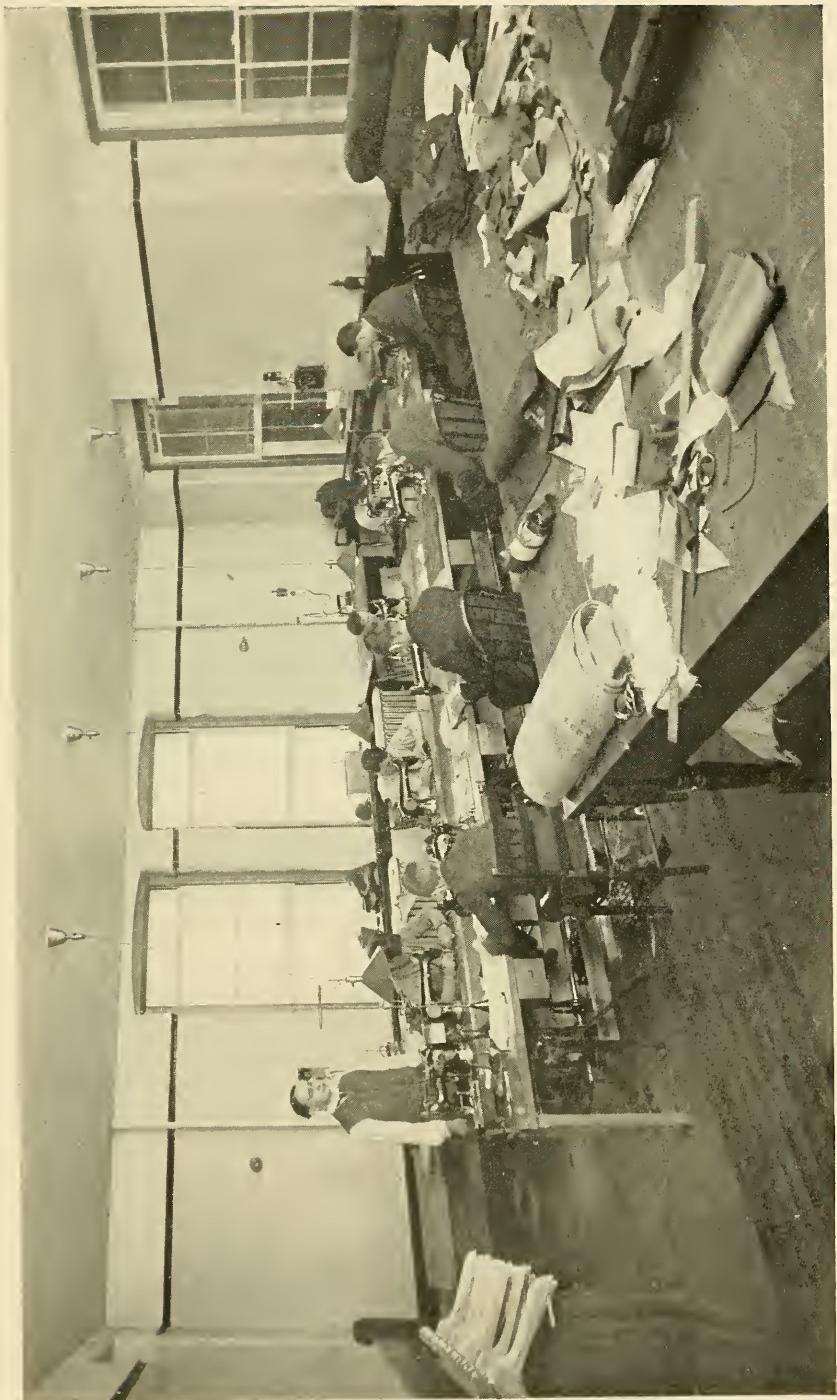
Printing



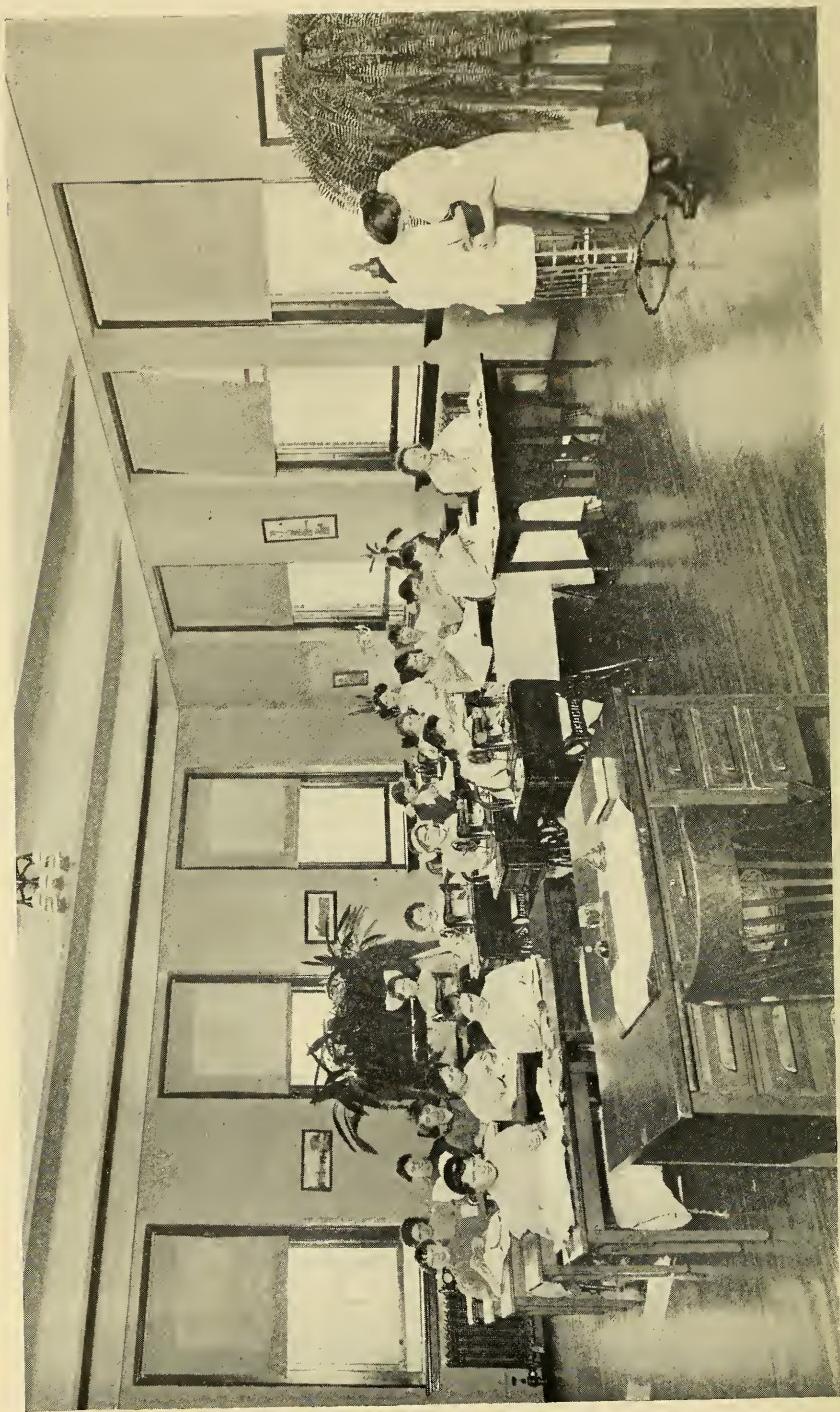
Broom making



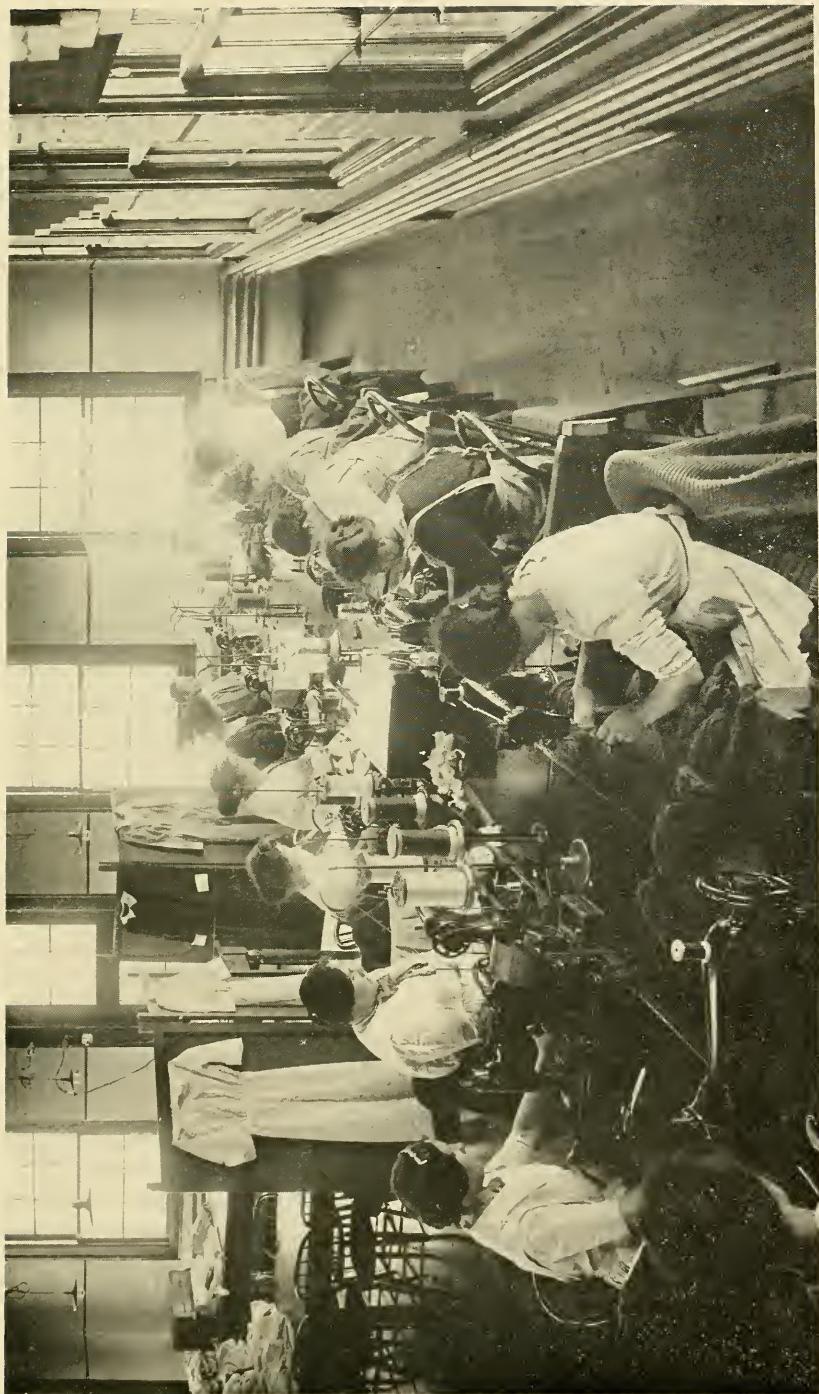
Making and repairing shoes



The tailor shop



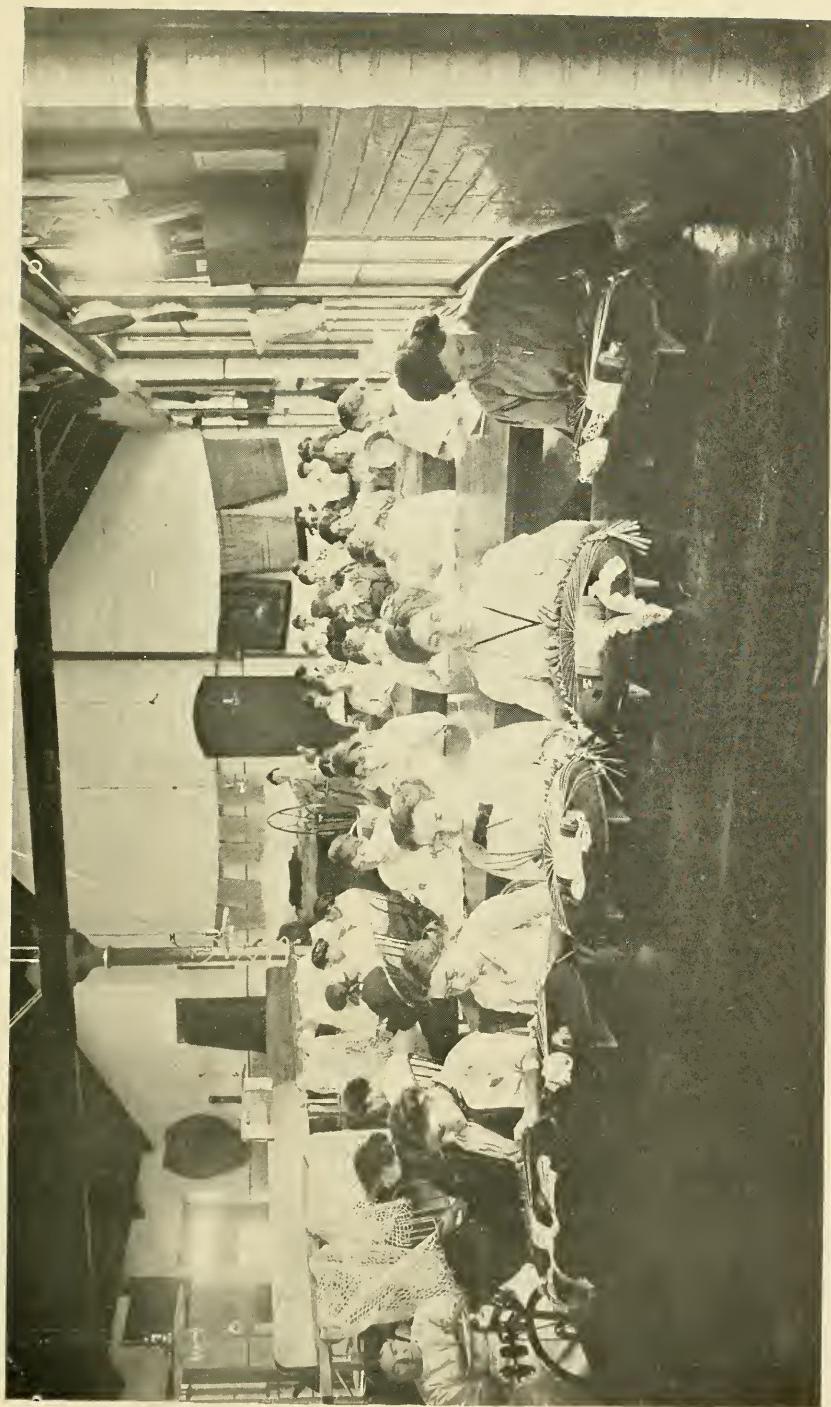
Girls' sewing and dressmaking class



Making clothes for the children



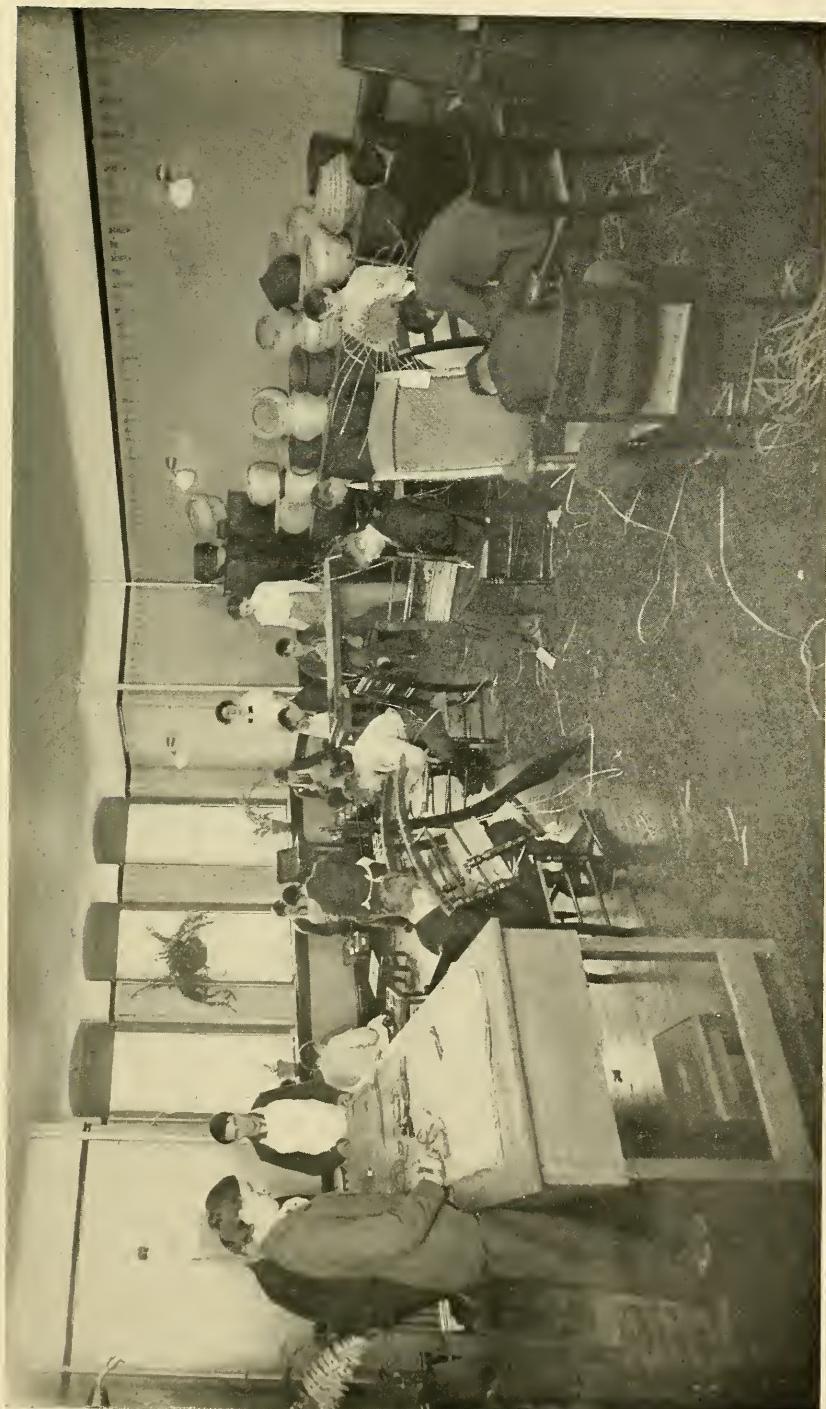
Class in domestic science



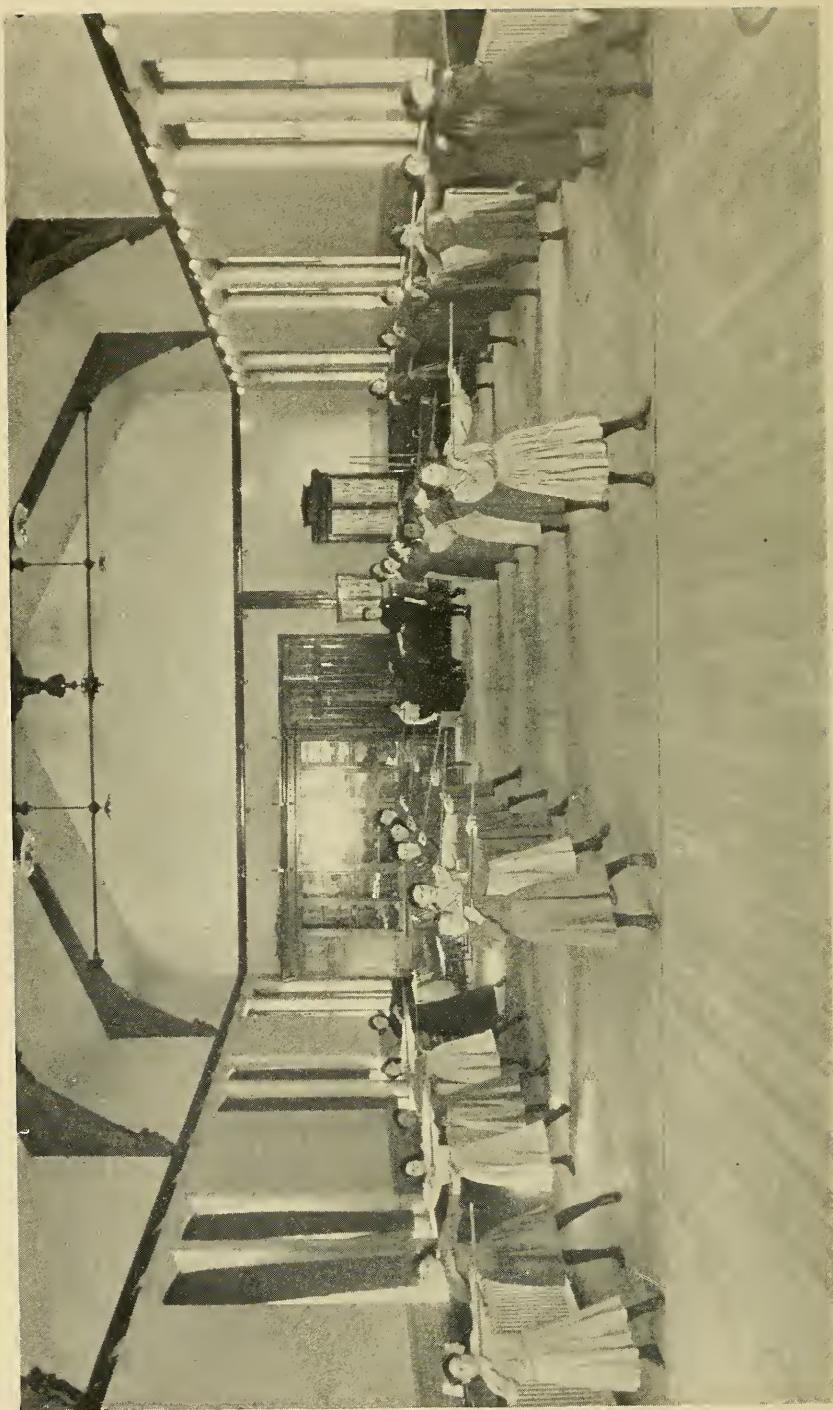
Lace making



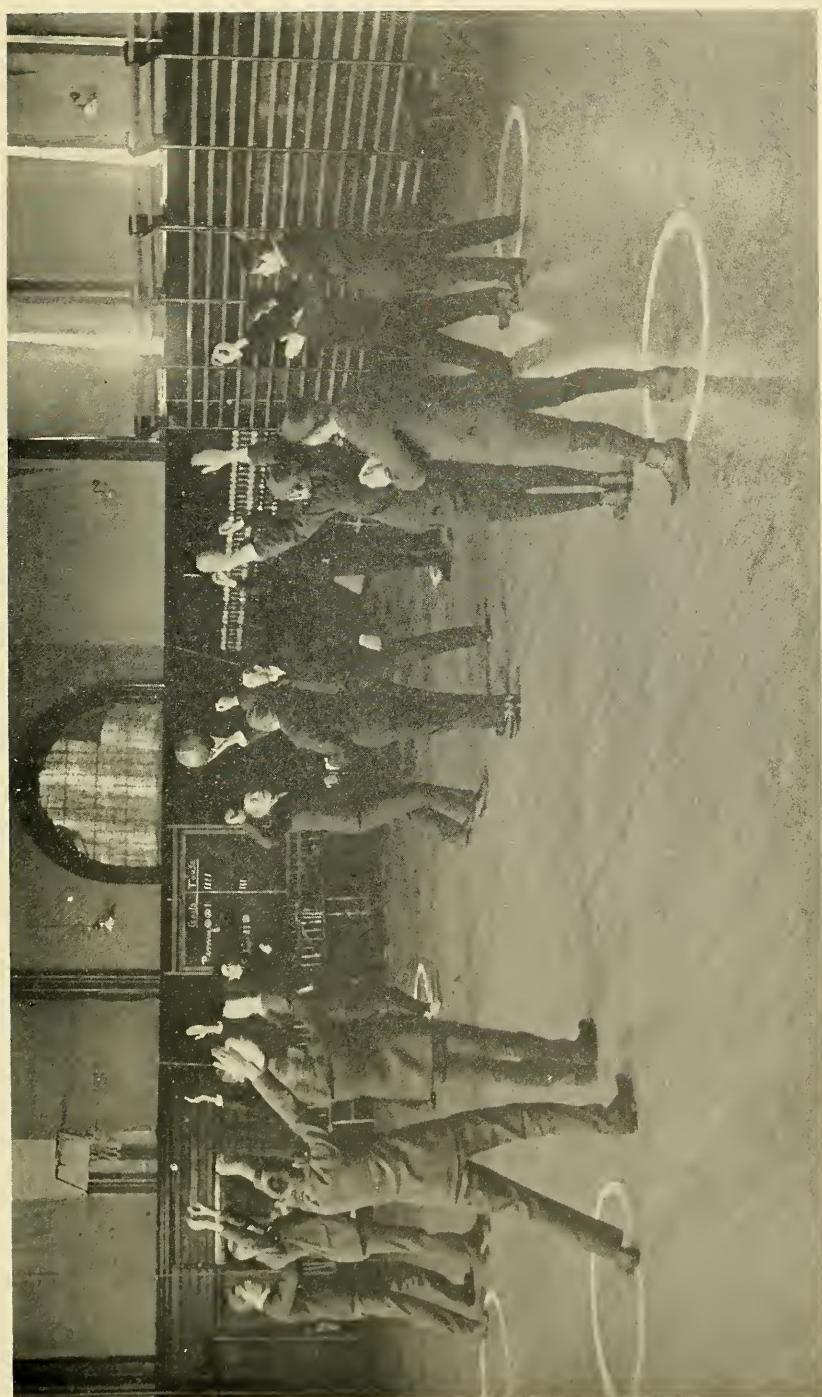
Knitting



Basket making and chair caning

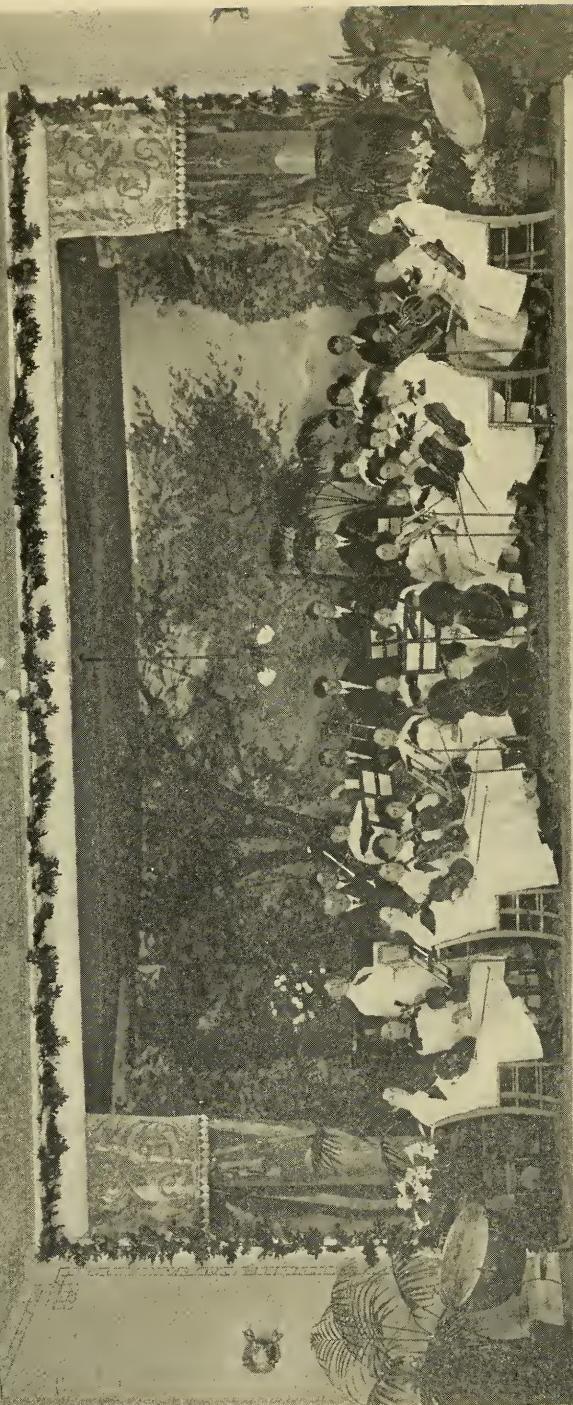


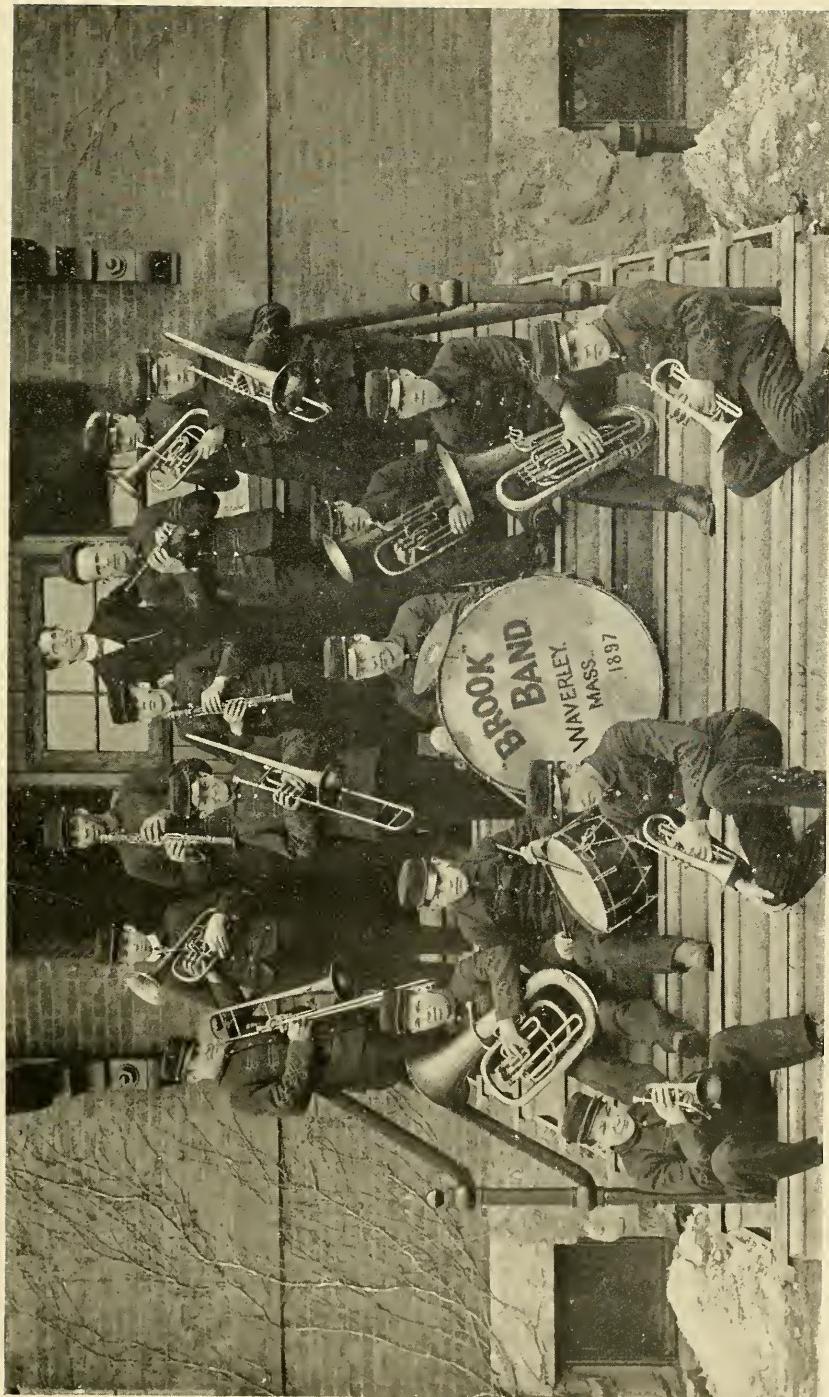
Physical training



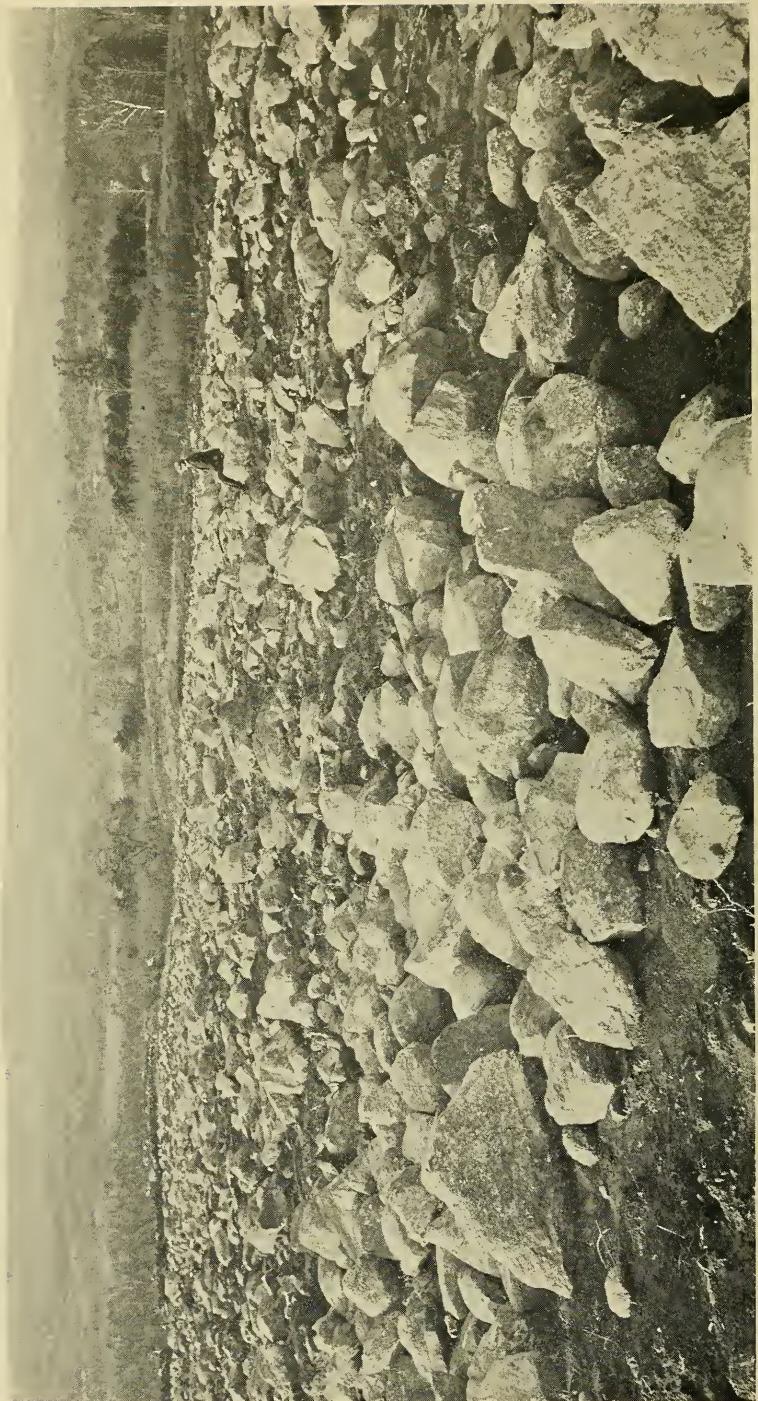
Boys' basket-ball game

The orchestra





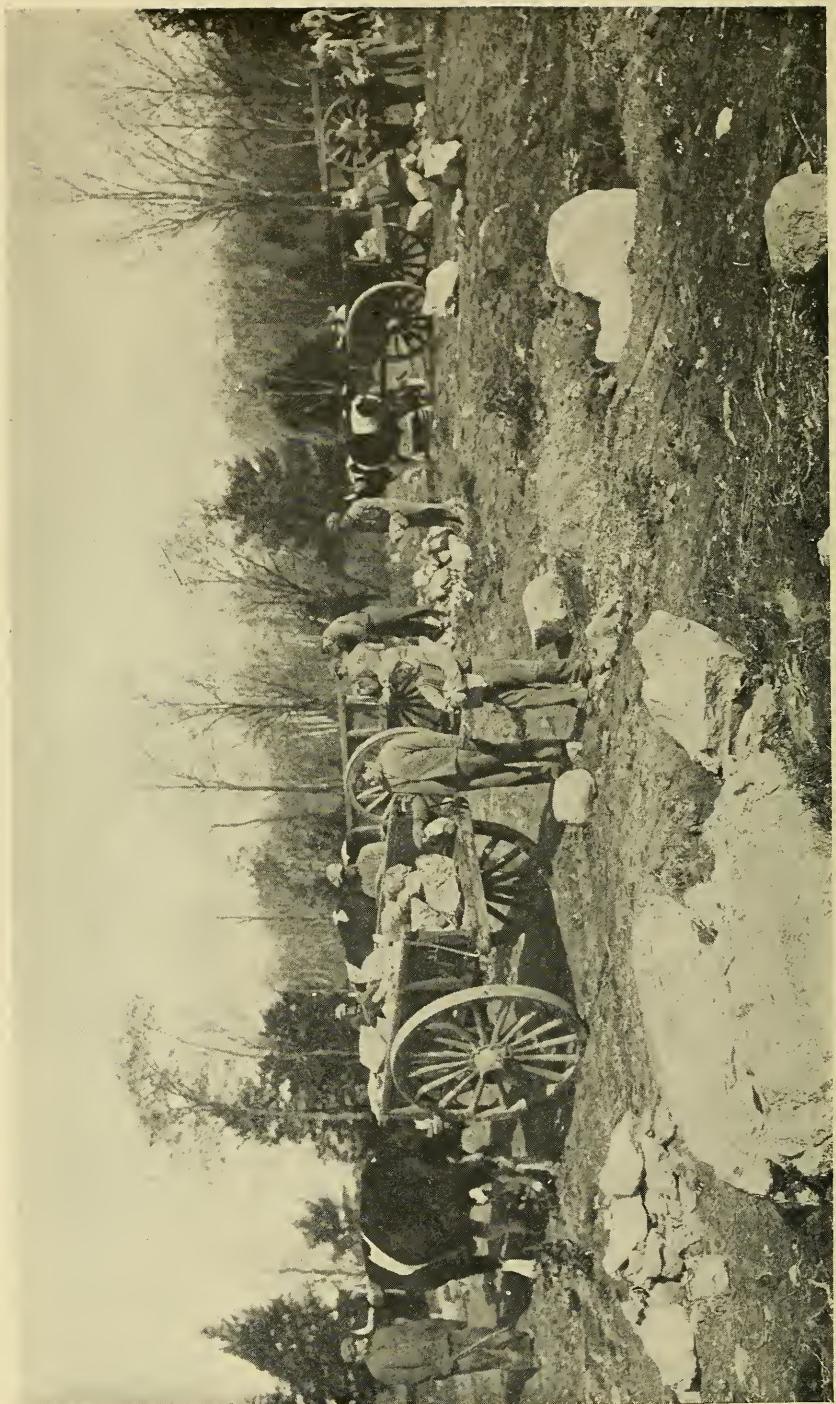
Boys' band



Stone taken out by the boys

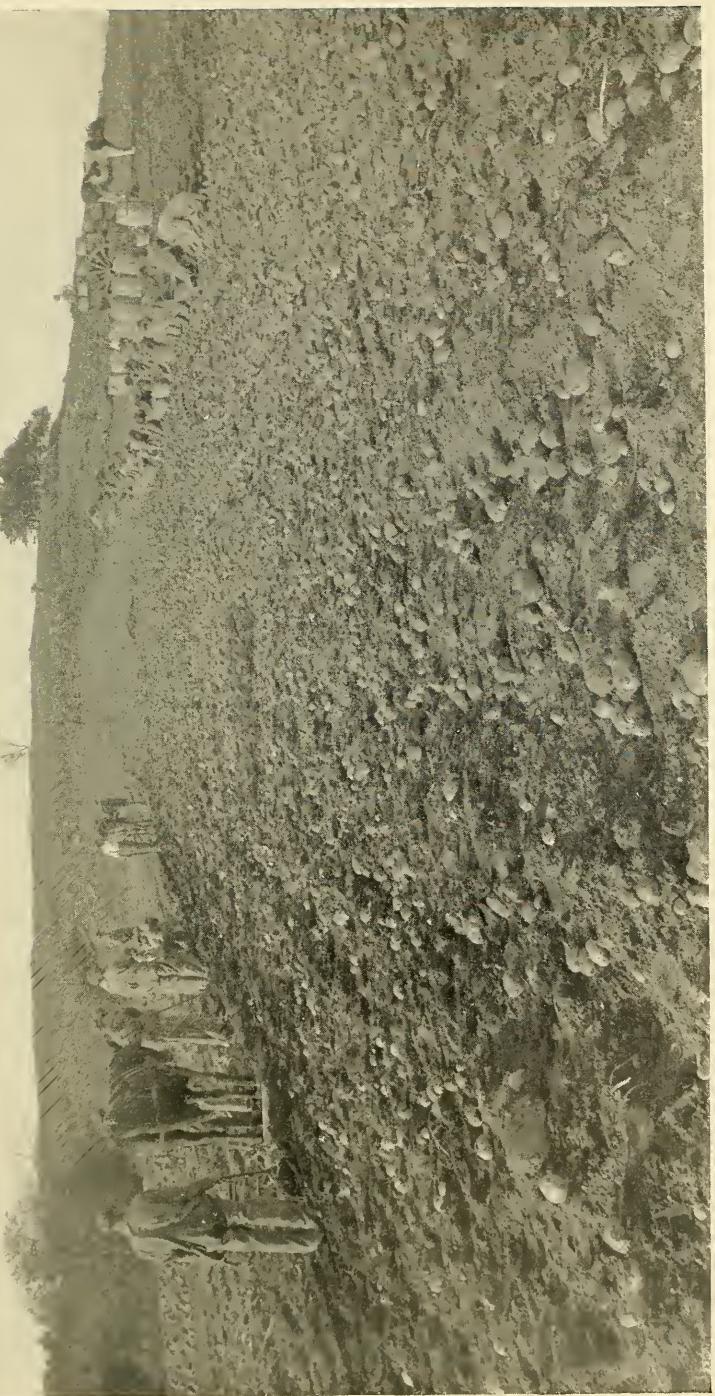


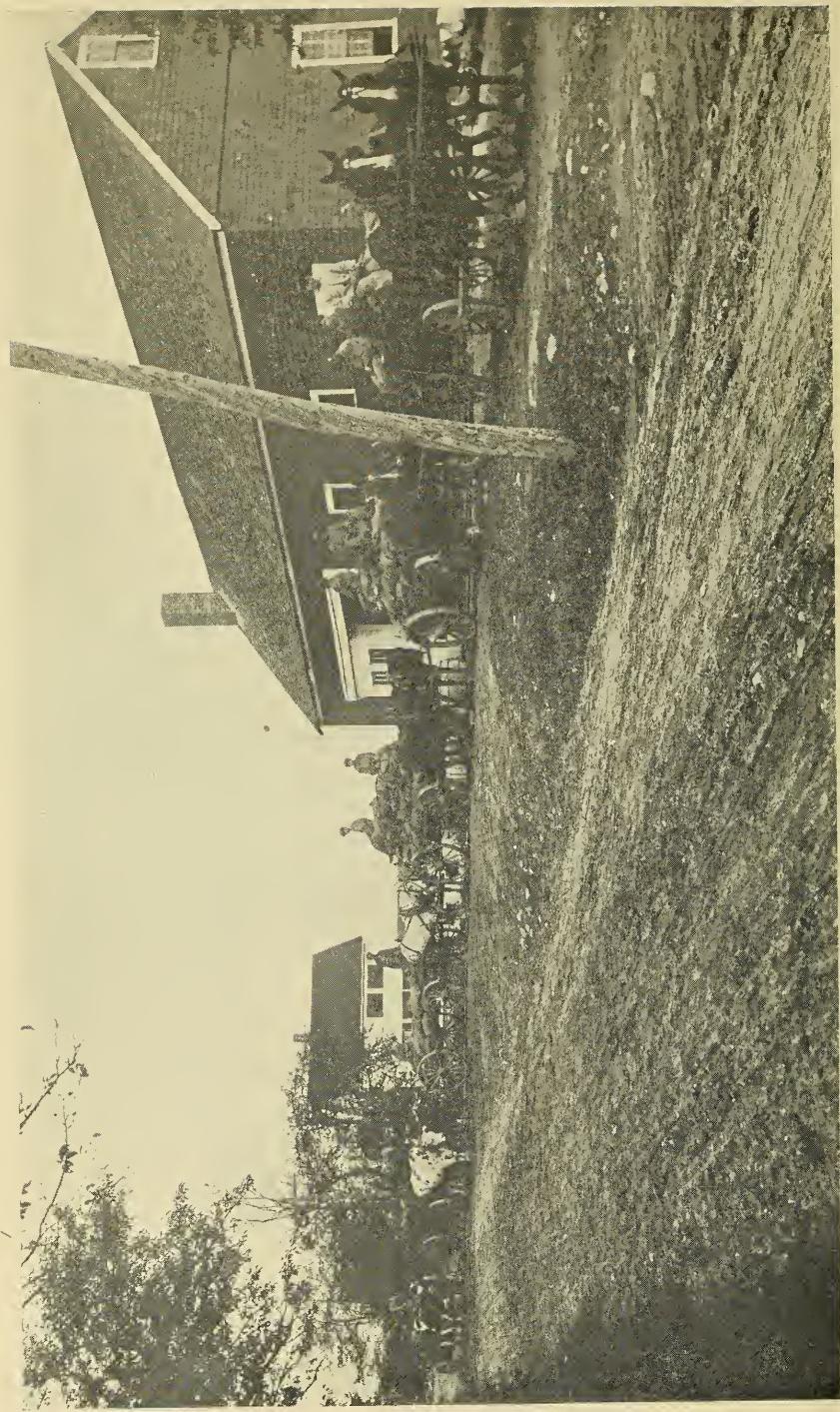
Removing large boulders



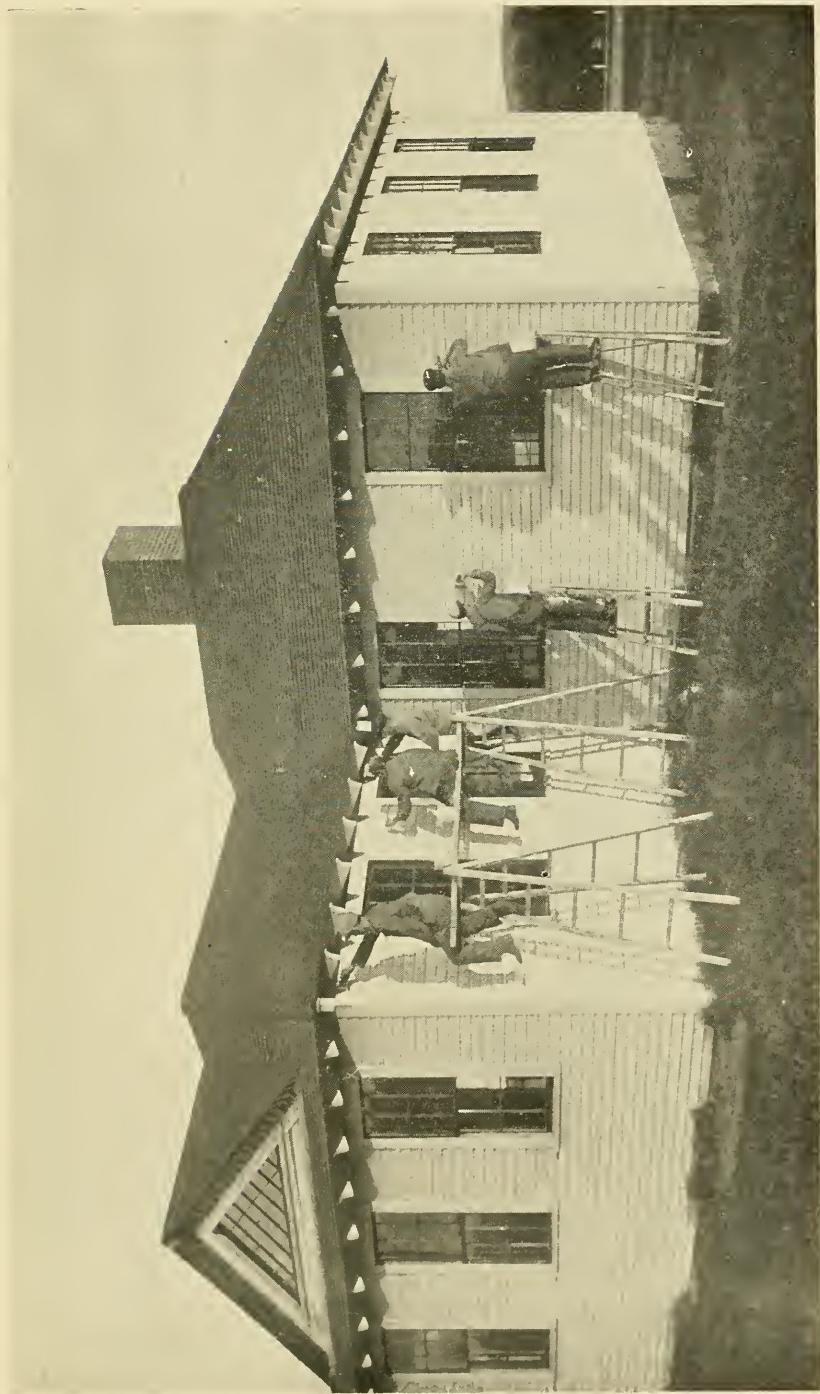
Carting away smaller stones

Potato harvest on cleared land



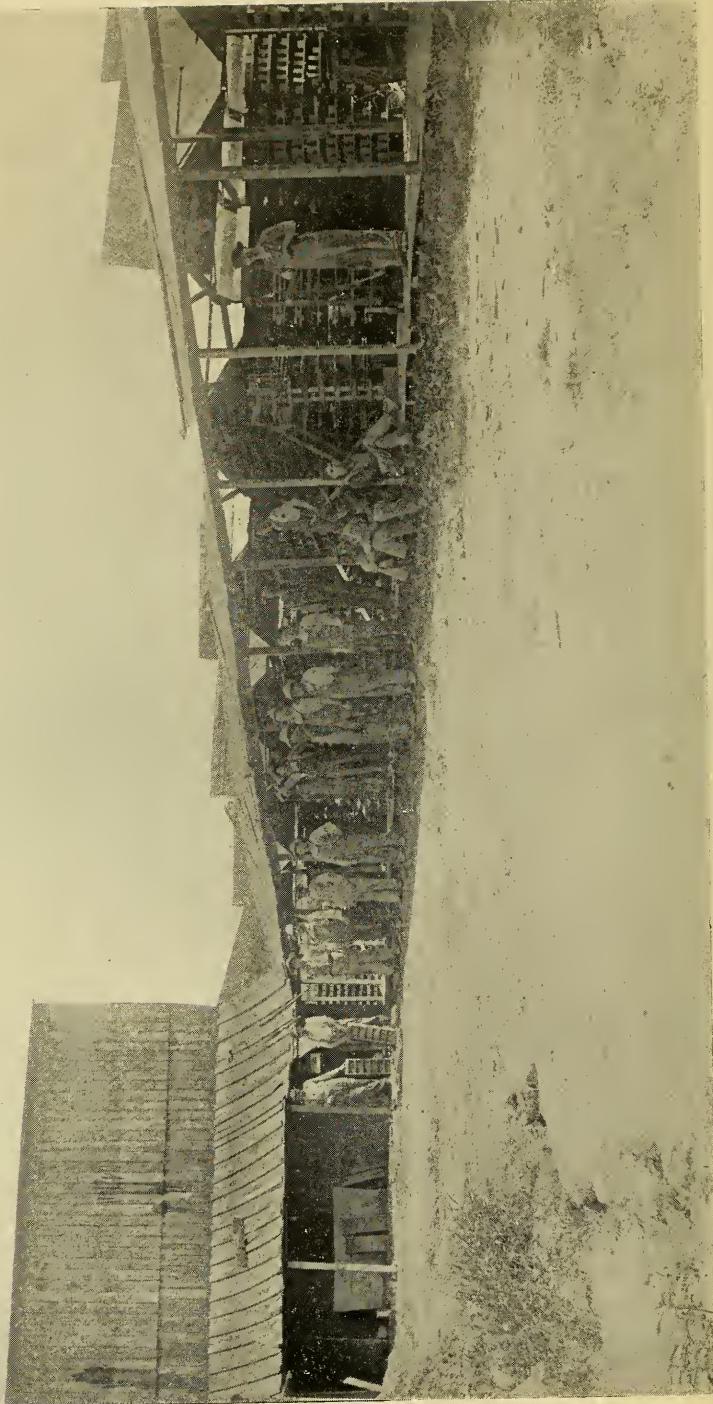


Farm produce to be shipped to the parent institution



Repairing their own cottage at the colony

Brick making



MENTAL HYGIENE

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR MENTAL HYGIENE, INC.

PUBLICATION OFFICE:

27 COLUMBIA STREET, ALBANY, N. Y.

EDITORIAL OFFICE:

50 UNION SQUARE, NEW YORK CITY

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Subscription : Two dollars a year; fifty cents a single copy. Publication Office: 27 COLUMBIA ST., ALBANY, N. Y. Correspondence should be addressed and checks made payable to "Mental Hygiene," 27 Columbia St., Albany, N. Y., or to The National Committee for Mental Hygiene, Inc., 50 Union Square, New York City.

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47-49 Columbia St.
Albany, N.Y.